Research in Educational Administration & Leadership

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Making Trouble in/for Educational Leadership

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Abstract	Article Info
This article presents critical and previously neglected perspectives in many current debates around education and educational leadership. Based on an interdisciplinary literature review we analyse the mission and the role of educational organizations in their commitment to an improvement in society. We examine the role of principals and other organizational members in the development of the educational organization they represent and how their understanding of the different factors which influence the exercise of educational leadership may or may not lead to a more just society. Our analysis highlights how these numerous and multivariate factors affect goal attainment, organizational and group members — teachers, students, and others — leadership, and leadership identity. Democracy, equality, capitalism, and social justice are some of the topics discussed. Change and change agent roles and status are considered, particularly tensions between insider and outsider critical friends and change agents. The article concludes with a discussion that revisit the concept educational leadership and bring back its essence. These ideas should be taken into account to design new education policies in a more informed way.	

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Prelude, an introduction to our critical approach

We cannot and should not be satisfied with the status quo, as change will not occur without deliberate action. Schools, schooling, and education as they currently stand leave much to be desired. But what does this mean for us, our work, our mission? While the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child[1] recognizes education as a fundamental right, not all children benefit equally. Whether one accepts the views of cultural reproduction theorists (e.g., Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990; Willis, 1981) or simply examines the available data on student achievement from high-stakes tests (both within countries and comparatively across countries), it is evident that students do not enjoy the same advantages in the formal, state-sponsored education they receive.

In light of these disparities, we must ask ourselves: What kind of education do we need to address these challenges? What type of education do we truly aspire to for future generations? And, perhaps more importantly, what role does educational leadership play in achieving this?

To remain relevant, current education policies and practices must evolve in response to social and global trends and, some might argue,

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[1] The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention). The Convention has been ratified by 196 countries; the United States is not among them (https://www.unicef.org/child-rights-convention/frequently-asked-questions).

future challenges. To do so, it is essential that we equip this generation of students with the skills, attitudes, and dispositions necessary to thrive, fulfill their obligations, and contribute meaningfully to their families, society, and the world at large. Today, schools and schooling are largely focused on outcomes, emphasizing the domains of education Biesta (2010) refers to as socialization and qualification, while neglecting the third domain: subjectification. [2] International reports such as PISA, TIMSS, TALIS, or PIRLS are examples of this, since of the four domains, subjectification is the most difficult, if not impossible, to measure. These reports overlook, downplay, or entirely omit relevant aspects of the individual, such as the capacity for dialogue, reflection, and the recognition of unique characteristics and potential.

Today, particularly in so-called "developed" countries, we operate under what Waite (2017, 2022) describes as "the hegemony of the quantitative"—a system dominated by testing regimes, big data, and algorithms. Governments and global corporations (e.g., Google, Facebook, and others) use these analytical tools to heavily influence, if not control, us, our lives, our options, and our preferences (Saltman & Means, 2017; Waite et al., 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Together, these forces inform and sustain what Waite (2014, 2016, 2022) refers to as "The Imperium"—a loosely connected yet influential network of power brokers from different sectors, including industry, banking, and the government. Though not formally organized, its members share common interests such as profit seeking, wealth accumulation, global stability, and control. This control is exerted primarily through

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[2] Subjectification, or the process of becoming a subject, refers to educating individuals "to become more autonomous and independent in their thinking and acting" (Biesta, 2010, p. 21).

schooling and its socialization processes and manifested in the policies and programs of NGOs and global organizations (i.e., the International Monetary Fund, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and others).

Education, in its broadest sense, should go beyond simply managing school projects. Instead, it must foster the active and reflective participation of students as citizens and leaders in society, both now and in the future. Additionally, education must adapt to the local and global demands of the settings in which it operates. Robinson (2015) argued that a key goal of education should be to provide opportunities for teaching faculty to learn, and that schools and universities should be spaces of connected learning—places where individuals not only develop but also realize their potential (Lawrence, 1950; Wright, 2010). This would require creative learning as a catalyst for discovery and a passion for learning. It entails a teaching/learning process that operates in a new way, where individuals, whether students, teachers, or leaders, learn to view the world from multiple perspectives and embrace a more global, critical, and comprehensive vision (García-Carmona, 2015).

Education, grounded in the social contract, envisions schools and educational institutions as being open to society, actively engaged in fostering communal benefit, and spaces for nurturing creativity. This approach involves the educational community and positions education as a tool for change and social improvement (Miller et al., 2019) and where leadership is essential in achieving the goals. Indeed, success will largely depend on the ability of educational leaders to cultivate a motivational and participatory environment that fosters reflection, confidence, trust, and respect within the organization and

the wider community. School leaders must also understand the broader influence of social, economic, cultural, and political systems to promote social justice for all students (Boske, 2014).

Educational leadership should not focus simply on maintaining the status quo. In this regard, school leaders and schools are having to rethink their roles and how they can better address the evolving needs of the community through their work. Such forward-thinking leadership is well-equipped to address societal changes driven by diversifying student and teacher populations, personalized learning experiences, inequality, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), among other factors (García-Carmona et al., 2022). Additionally, the expectations of community members' are also high and challenging to address (Gurmu, 2020; Miller et al., 2019).

Given such profound societal changes, educators must embrace new directions in leadership. The traditional methods that once served us are no longer sufficient to address the complexities of today's world. We cannot simply rely on "best practices" or outdated models. Instead, we must reimagine our approach to education and leadership to meet the evolving needs or our students and communities. We must learn to think for ourselves and reimagine the world with fresh perspectives. We must be our own best leaders. While the old models, including those discussed here, have value and should be recognized for their contributions, certain aspects, as we will discuss in greater detail below, may be revived or adapted to serve as a foundation upon which to stand and move courageously into an uncharted future.

But we must have a compass (either moral, ethical, or of some other kind) by which we guide and gauge our efforts. It is imperative that we remain true to our beliefs in the dignity of all, in the betterment of our conditions (avoiding all the while the tender traps laid for us by antiquated Enlightenment thinking or master narratives). As educators, as teachers, we must refuse to be seduced and distracted by numerologists and others seeking to control us, our work, and the lives of generations of children in our care. We owe them our best efforts.

In what follows, we will present a critical examination of educational leadership as documented thus far—its core premises, overarching themes (where they exist), and, most importantly for our purposes, its gaps, limitations, and contradictions. Our primary goal is to encourage reflection on how educational leadership is currently conceived and to assess it through both a critical and constructive lens. In doing so, we hope to contribute, even in a small way, to the development of a field to which we are deeply committed.

What is educational leadership and why does it matter?

Following Biesta (2017), we will deliberately avoid adopting a technicist or instrumentalist framing of the applications and practices, past or present, that the literature identifies as defining features of educational leadership. Instead, we step back and engage with a more fundamental question: "Educational leadership for what?". Biesta commented that:

> *Education has a particular interest to stand for, a particular interest to defend. This educational interest in the possibility for children and young people to exist as responsible subjects of their own actions may be something that educational leaders need to take into*

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consideration when they seek to formulate their own answers to the question of what it is that they should lead for. (2017, p. 25)

In asking, like Biesta, "Leadership for what?" we must first address the question: Education for what? What are, or should be, the aims of education (Biesta, 2010)? In the U.S., the *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, published in 1918 by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education of the National Education Association, outlined seven key objectives of education. These included health, command of fundamental processes, vocation, worthy home-membership, worthy use of leisure, and ethical character—all arguably valuable aims even today, albeit adapted to better suit today's schools and societies.

In Spain, Article 27 of the Constitution of 1978 established that education should aim for the full development of the individual, while upholding the democratic principles of coexistence, fundamental rights, and freedoms. In line with Biesta's (2010, 2017) concept of education's subjectification role, education—and by extension, educational leadership—carries an inherent ethical dimension (Starratt 1994). In this context, Lorenzo Delgado (2004) conceptualized leadership as a "function, a quality, and a property that resides in the group and energizes the organization to generate its own growth in terms of a shared mission or project" (pp. 195–196, authors' translation). However, while educational leadership should reflect this ethical dimension, decisions made by leaders often do not. Instead, many (perhaps most) administrative decisions are driven by purely contingent, pragmatic, and/or utilitarian considerations. Novak's (2002) vision is particularly relevant here, as it presents leadership as fundamentally concerned with people, emphasizing care and ethics in

relationships, both among individuals and within institutions and society. Furthermore, educational leadership for social justice is deeply rooted in ethics, recognizing ethical considerations as inseparable from it practice (García-Carmona et al., 2021; Miller et al., 2019; Waite and Arambula, 2020).

Educational leadership: A new key, historically understood

Reflection and critique are essential processes in education, though this has not always been the case. Burke (2000, 2012, 2016) and other authors remind us that knowledge and knowledge dissemination were historically viewed simply as the transfer of received wisdom and that questioning and criticizing authority were considered heretical. The critique(s) we present here are just the beginning, not the final word. We must think about the future, envisioning it first to shape it later. We need to push our thinking into the near future. With this in mind, we believe that the field of educational leadership would benefit from critical and reflective deliberative processes.

Leadership is concerned with the well-being of others and the collective good, considering the dignity and rights of others. As Leithwood and Day (2007) noted, leadership is an interactive process. This practice, rooted in teacher-learner dialogue, involves specific skills that must be considered when energizing the classroom and in the act of educating. Woods (2005) emphasized that the essence of leadership is not an individual act but rather a dynamic relationship of almost imperceptible directions, movements, and orientations that have no clear beginning or end. It is in this interplay of processes involving the student, the teacher, and the leader that educational leadership emerges. In this regard, there are clear parallels with Arendtian action. For Arendt (1958), action is one of the three essential

activities in humans' *vita activa* or active life (labor and work being the other two). Action is defined by its plurality, anonymity of origin, endless nature, unpredictability, and the unknowability of its outcomes.

This actualization takes into account the contexts in which the educational process occurs. In this sense, educational leadership is concerned with the development and negotiation of how the organization positions itself in relation to individuals who are both internal and external to the school. Here rationale and action come together in practice in the unpredictable, ever-changing, and uncertain contexts of the school. This is what Sockett (1987) referred to as "reason in action," which suggests that the situation is fluid, constantly evolving, and subject to change. The actions of professionals are guided by what is deemed best, that is, based on judicious practice (professional judgment) and experience (Biesta, 2014).

In this way, educational leaders strive to accomplish at least three fundamental goals for students in their educational practice. According to Robinson (2015), these goals are rooted in motivation: 1) inspiring students to give their best through a passion for the academic discipline and by fostering trust and confidence; 2) developing students' knowledge and skills so that they feel confident and continue growing; and 3) nurturing creativity, that is, encouraging the development of competencies and sparking curiosity to help students become original thinkers with unique thoughts. Through such efforts, educational leaders enhance student performance by securing and providing resources, motivating both students and teachers, and creating a climate of trust and confidence within the classroom and school. Guided by creativity in thought and action, this atmosphere

fosters confidence in both students and teachers while supporting the positive evolution of schools within an educational community oriented towards the future.

Re-thinking leadership roles

Leadership roles are related to yet distinct from administrative roles, just as leadership differs from administration and management. The way leadership roles are conceived and conducted is inseparable from the contexts in which they take place. Global, ideological, or conceptual contexts shape local actions, affecting how they are perceived, conceived, framed, and executed.

Context matters, but not in the sense that everything is simply relative. In some contexts, female students and leaders face extreme violence, such as being spat upon, having acid thrown in their faces, or experiencing more subtle forms of assault. In more tribal societies, leaders may be expected to prioritize members of their tribe or clan and face criticism when they try to act fairly and do what is right for all students, faculty, or other groups within the larger community. In patriarchal societies (which most are to some degree) women are often subtly or overtly discouraged from pursuing leadership positions or face obstacles when they try. Male leaders may also face backlash if they exhibit non-conforming gender behaviors, including leadership styles deemed more feminine than masculine. Such situations are examples of the "glass ceiling" and its implications for education (Cáceres et al. 2012; Waite, 2017), but the reactions can easily be more profound, pervasive, and insidious.

Multicultural contexts present distinct challenges that must be taken into account when addressing educational leadership. In these

situations, school principals and other educators face unique challenges for integrating disadvantaged and immigrant youth, requiring them to move beyond debates of "equality" to adopt practices of "equity." These practices are essential to meet the changing needs of students amidst unprecedented immigration and demographic shifts (García-Carmona et al., 2021). Crossing national borders demands a gradual process of intercultural education to facilitate the resocialization of immigrant children and their parents, while also promoting intercultural adaptation and accommodation by teachers and school leaders. Schools play a vital role in such efforts. Systematic interventions, along with social justice and culturally relevant leadership practices, are crucial to preventing the exclusion of these youths and their families, both before they enter school and certainly when they leave.

In this sense, it is important to emphasize the need for schools to open up to society at large and especially to the community. The contexts in which schools are situated shape and enrich the teaching-learning process. Therefore, continuous educational improvement must be a central focus when discussing leadership. Building and fostering relationships in these environments create opportunities for mutual enrichment.

Beyond Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership should embody socially just principles, working towards social justice both within schools and in society, while being oriented toward the future of students and the broader community. Such leadership must be based on a well-articulated vision of the organization's goals and encourage collaboration to achieve its mission (García-Carmona, 2014). However, for-profit

schools, charter schools, and other commodified educational institutions, particularly those rooted in a capitalist, corporatist paradigm (Waite, 2014), diminish the potential for contributing to social and economic justice. This is where Waite's (2020) "in defense of (public) education" becomes pertinent. Without a shared or unified educational experience upon which to build, the *demos* or social cohesion of the public becomes weakened or fractured. Those whose only option is public school are likely to be marginalized, groomed for wage labor, if they work at all, and their future as fully agential citizens with control over their lives may be seriously limited.

These ideas are reflective of Freirian notions of education as liberation. In this sense, schools can be understood as a space for personal transcendence and fulfillment (Biesta, 2019) and vehicles for the transformation and betterment of society. Although a critical educator may not be able to transform a nation from a course they coordinate or a seminar they direct, they should not succumb to ennui; they can demonstrate that change from within is possible, thus reinforcing the importance of the "political-pedagogical task" (Freire, 1997, p. 108).

Re-thinking educational organizations

Beyond schools and educational institutions or organizations, much of modern life is shaped by what occurs within organizations and organizational settings (Waite, 2010, 2022; Whyte, 1956). Understanding what organizations are and how they influence not only students, teachers, administrators, and leaders, but also broader social contexts should be a primary concern. However, these factors are often overlooked, accepted without question, or taken for granted. Organizational influences are rarely scrutinized, nor are alternatives to prevailing models seriously considered. While there are some notable

examples of the problems inherent in organizational structures and their effects on students and educational outcomes (e.g., Waite, 2010, 2014, 2022), they remain exceptions rather than the norm.

For example, Waite (Ajofrín, 2008) referred to education administrators as "prisoners of the organization" (p. 3). Other authors (e.g., Morgan, 2006), borrowing from and extending on a Weberian perspective, view educational organizations as prisons (Weber's "iron cage") or inhibitive spaces (see Graeber, 2016). Waite (2010, 2014) demonstrated how not only educational organizations, but other types of organizations and associations in post-modern societies ~~worldwide~~ have been deeply influenced or "colonized" by corporate values and structures, what is known as "corporativism."

Such an analysis could provide educational leaders with the vision and empowerment they need to (re)design educational organizations as models in which focus is placed on the development of each member of the community.

Graeber (2016) demonstrated how the lived world has become thoroughly bureaucratized. Though its origins can be traced to the Church and ancient Chinese imperial governance, the bureaucratic form has been co-opted by capitalism, with the two systems operating in symbiosis. As a result, corporativism has emerged as the dominant social structure. By engaging with Foucault's (2010) notion of biopolitics, we can better understand the profound and fundamental changes this brings to both the subject and its subjectivity, extending beyond the concept of *homo economicus*. Corporativism—a bureaucratic capitalist ontology—ultimately infects or colonizes the entire social world. Efforts towards social justice, or even less ambitious attempts

at social change and improvement, are largely ineffective without an anti-capitalist framework, strategies, and tactics (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 2016; Kundnani, 2023; Wright, 2019).

Bureaucratic capitalism, if not redundant, is antithetical, even disastrous for education and schooling, particularly when schools are modeled on more communitarian ideals and structures. Educational leaders committed to equality, egalitarianism and, above all, social justice, must remain vigilant to the many ways corporativism (bureaucratic capitalism) seeks to infiltrate education, schools, and pedagogical relationships (i.e., learning). Since schools reflect society, it is unlikely that they can be transformed rapidly and effortlessly into institutions that are less capitalistic and more communitarian. Nonetheless, vigilant leaders will recognize and work to mitigate the most harmful aspects of corporativism and seek alternative, more communitarian-based models and methods. Through a Gramscian lens, such leaders will recognize key moments where strategies of maneuver and positioning can be employed more effectively (Hall, 2016).

Building on Rancière's (1991) notion of intellectual equality and his assertion that the central issue is how to be an equal being in an unequal society, the chief concern of justice-minded educational leaders is how to build and sustain an equality-driven school in an unequal (capitalist) society.

The Hegemony of the Quantitative

Rethinking organizations, and with it, leadership, is a creative and courageous act. Putting such ideas into practice is even more courageous and may even be risky. A simple example of how we might

rethink our world(s), beginning with critique and propelled by dialogue and discourse and fueled by creativity and imagination, concerns the dominance of obsessive quantification, what Husserl referred to as "the mathematisation of the world" (as cited in Crotty, 1988, p. 28), in reference to Galileo. (Actually, the phrase Husserl used was the "mathematization of nature" [1970, p. 23], but by nature, Husserl is understood to mean the plena, or the surplus left from mathematicians' and physicists' modellings of the world). This hegemony of the quantitative (Waite, 2017) sweeps us up, seduces us in its all too facile representation of reality. An obsession with quantification and quantifying is an all too easy way to think about, talk about, and even view the world. The predominance of quantification speaks to the supremacy of positivism, of empiricism. It is not an easy habit to break. It is difficult to think otherwise. Postmodernism served as a bit of a corrective, as does the new materialism (Barad, 2007).

Indeed, many leadership narratives and theories are of a positivistic bent or inclination, based, as it were, on causality, prediction, and control. In fact, it seems as if the more positivistic the theory, the more popular it is. These include so-called data-based decision making, so-called value-added assessment, and others. Awareness of these tendencies is perhaps the first step in counteracting their most insidious effects. An openness toward and employment of oppositional forms, such as the narrative or storytelling components of, for example, critical race theory, can serve as counterweights to the hegemony of the quantitative.

The Leader's Identity and Positionality

It is not our intention to revisit past debates and controversies in the field merely for the sake of rehashing them or covering well-worn ground. Rather, we wish to briefly mention the differences and similarities between leadership as a task, a function, and even a field in Bourdieu's (1977) sense of the term, and administration, similarly conceived as a field with its own tasks and functions. We do this in the hope of offering fresh insight, as these issues remain despite the evolution of discourse in their respective fields. Having invoked Bourdieu, we also draw on his concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1987) in our examination of educational leadership. What defines a leader's identity? How do they perceive themselves? A difficult balancing act ensues—leaders, more so than administrators, make use of the tensions, the dynamics in the insider-outsider role. Leaders are more likely to be in that position having been members of the tribe they lead.[3] Change can be fueled by this insider-outsider dynamic; but the critic within has more knowledge, leverage, and empathy, derived, in large part, from her identity and position (Walzer, 2002). Detached, objective, even-handed, fair and unbiased; these are some of the values or dispositions we might hope for in our leaders. Burke (2016) borrowed Karl Mannheim's notion of the free-floating intellectual (*freischwebende Intelligenz*) to try to capture and depict the dual positioning of, in this case, the social scientist or historian, in terms of involvement and detachment. Walzer asked these poignant questions concerning detachment: "How much distance is 'critical distance'? What kind of criticism is possible from far away and from up close?"

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[3] In the ape world at least, interlopers, usually juvenile males, are regarded with suspicion and accorded marginal roles when they first attach themselves to a new troop (Cheney & Seyfarth, 2007).

(p. xii). Walzer discussed the social critic's personal morality, their goodness. The social critic's essential values are three: courage, compassion, and a keen eye. Walzer described this last virtue using Max Weber's term *augenmass*, "which is translated into English as 'a sense of proportion,' a capacity to make 'cool' judgments about the relative importance of this or that" (p. xvii). Or "perhaps," wrote Walzer, "the idiom *ein gutes augenmass haben* comes closer: 'to have a sure eye.' Seeing and judging "requires an immediacy of vision as well as distance and coolness. The immediacy comes first, and its loss is especially disastrous for the critical project" (p. xvii).

In line with Walzer (2002), we believe that for critics to be successful and truly agential, they must operate from within, embedded in schools, the education administration, and other relevant institutions. This is why administrators and other school leaders are essential to radical change efforts (and even to less radical ones). For Walzer, as for us, "good social criticism is the work of good men and women" (p. xiv).

Knowledge in/of the Field of Educational Leadership

As Burke (2016) reminds us, all knowledge progresses through four stages—gathering, analyzing, disseminating, and employing—and the knowledge that leaders engage with (and those who study them) is no exception. These epistemological issues are pertinent to our discussion of educational leaders, yet they are rarely addressed in popular leadership texts. Such texts are marked by silences, lacunae, gaps, and omissions.[4]

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[4] Ignorance, much like knowledge, is socially constructed and shaped by taboos, secrets, concealment, prevarication, and more. In his taxonomy of ignorance, Smithson (1989) identifies various forms, including conscious ignorance,

Ignorance, or non-knowledge, is an important consideration for educational leaders and those who educate them—not merely as something to be eradicated or erased, but as an epistemological consideration: What is known, and how do we know it? What knowledge is concealed from us and what knowledge do we hide from ourselves or others? Why do we do so, and to what end? While most of us are well aware of the links between knowledge and power, we often fail to reflect on the connections between ignorance and power. This is especially pertinent in today's post-truth climate. As Kirsch and Dilley (2015) pointed out:

> *The idea that there is a general crisis of confidence in contemporary society about what knowledge is, what it is for and what its impact on others might be. The debate going on at the heart of education in the U.K. and elsewhere at present is stimulated by the policies of governments aimed at making teaching and research more accountable, more relevant to taxpayers and the labour market. These concerns act as triggers of epistemological doubt, and they raise our awareness of how not only knowledge, but also ignorance, is produced.* (p. 6)

Schools can be thought of as epistemological communities (Crotty, 1998) and, if this is so, the leaders in/of the school (formal, informal, co-present or not, regardless of title and of reference group) can be seen to be complicit in the perpetuation of regimes of ignorance. A regime of ignorance is "the total set of relations that unite, in a given period or cultural context, the discursive practices and power relations that give

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informational and epistemological ignorance, neglect, absence, distortion, incompleteness, uncertainty, untopicality, undecidability, inaccuracy, taboo, confusion, and non-specificity.

rise to epistemological gaps and forms of unknowing that have generative social effects and consequences" (Kirsch & Dilley, 2015, p. 23). Again, awareness is critical and practical, as addressing ignorance is a true school improvement project.

Leader's Relations to the Group, the Tribe, the Herd

Principals, heads, and educational leaders of all stripes must contend with in-group/out-group dynamics which can manifest as blatant tribalism. A positive bias toward members of the in-group (cronyism, nepotism, and corruption are possible/likely in such organizational contexts) and a negative bias toward members of an out-group (e.g., leading to discrimination, exclusion, and even outright hostility that may culminate in harassment and violence). Affinity/preference for members of one's own tribe, clan, or family often outweighs considerations of competence. (See Cuddy et al., 2013, on likeability or 'fit' versus competence, and Durante et al., 2012). The group exerts pressure on school leaders to conform to what are, in our opinion, dysfunctional group norms or cultural practices, such as hiring members of the tribe or the extended family (Shah, 2010), regardless of their competence.

What is needed instead are proactive community leaders and activists who are deeply rooted in the community and dedicated to promoting its betterment and well-being (García-Carmona et al., 2021). A deep love and respect for one's community—core values of both the critic and change agent—can inspire candid, open, and honest dialogue, which is an essential tool for this professional work.

It takes courage to challenge or even resist strong group norms or beliefs and practices with effective tactics and strategies. Here again

we find the overlaps or interrelatedness among epistemologies, knowledge, ignorance, and practices. Practices, beliefs, and epistemes are contextual, and so is leadership. This is one reason we are cautious not to generalize or prescribe for others. Knowledge dissemination is essentially knowledge translation (Burke, 2016), where both the provider and recipient shape the knowledge (data, theory, etc.) to make it comprehensible, using familiar terms or concepts (vocabulary) and adapting it to local contexts.

As Burke (2016) noted, newer technologies and communication media facilitate the dissemination and exchange of knowledge, as does the rise of a lingua franca, such as English. A key issue here is the hegemony of English or Anglophone leadership texts, and their adoption in non-English-speaking or non-Western contexts. The export-import of English-language leadership texts, theories, models, and practices often functions as a form of imperialism (García-Carmona et al. 2020; Oplatka & Arar 2016). Western models can simply become the standards by which other leadership practices (and "results") and knowledge are judged, often despairingly so. In such cases, multiculturalism and comparative studies of the experiences of different countries become especially important, as they account for a variety of contexts and cultures.

We can prevent the premature closure of the field of educational leadership, what Burke (2016) referred to as specialization, by intentionally incorporating authors and ideas from the peripheries of the field and from geographically diverse perspectives—ideas related to philosophy, creativity, and eco-justice, to name just a few (see Waite, 2017). Narrowing the focus too early or becoming too myopic causes us to lose sight of the broader, more general good, such as the purposes

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of schooling and education (Biesta, 2010; Dewey, 1916). Diversity, especially a diversity of ideas, enriches us, broadens our understanding, and reconnects us to our shared humanity. It has the potential to remind us of our purpose, our mission, or why we engage in this thing called leadership in the first place.

What relationship do leaders have with the group or organization?
When leaders rise through the ranks of the organization, are they so socialized that changing the status quo becomes more difficult? Do their encumbrances, debts, and allegiances irreversibly bind them? If an outsider becomes the leader of a group, resistance and organizational inertia often emerge. As mentioned, it is difficult for an outsider to join an existing group, let alone lead one (Cheney & Seyfarth, 2007). For a leader to be effective, they must share commonalities with the group they lead. Leaders may offer minimal direction, instead focusing on understanding the group and articulating the direction it is headed (Gardner, 1995), which is the reason they are appointed or assume leadership positions. To be effective, adroit leaders must connect with the group, ensuring they do not move too far ahead of those they lead (Csikszentmihalyi & Wolfe, 2000; Gardner, 1995).

The stranger (Simmel, 1950), the shepherd (Hazony, 2012), the *übermensch* (Nietzsche, 1968), and the barbarian (Lingis, 1994; Sloterdijk, 2013) are roles or identities that may be ascribed to or adopted by innovative or unconventional leaders, yet which speak to a relationship with the group. As Simmel (1950, pp. 401-405) reminded us, the stranger "imports qualities into it [the group], which do not and cannot stem from the group itself." Further, he noted how "the stranger, like the poor and like sundry 'inner enemies,' is an element

of the group itself. His position as a full-fledged member involves both being outside it and confronting it." The stranger, like Hazony's (2012) shepherd, "is by nature no 'owner of soil'—soil not only in the physical sense, but also in the figurative sense of a life substance which is fixed, if not in a point in space, at least in an ideal point of the social environment". The stranger "is freer, practically and theoretically; he surveys conditions with less prejudice; his criteria for them are more general and more objective ideals; he is not tied down in his actions by habit, piety, and precedent." Still, we must keep in mind the space, the geo-political, temporal moment inhabited by the leader—be they a stranger, adoptee, or kith and kin, and the group for which they serve in a leadership role. We are reminded of the ontological aspects of such groups, educational units in our case. Lortie (2009, pp. 50-51) draws our attention to the structural aspects of schools and districts and to "the concentration of power at the apex." This, for him, implies that "independent schools are entirely dependent units; no school has the financial resources or legitimation to operate without district authorization and support." Lortie discussed what he termed "the 'distinctness' of its [the district's] internal units" and referencing Weick's (1976) well-worn notion of the loosely-coupled system, commented on the "'thick' boundaries around subunits within school districts and the rich internal lives that are not immediately apparent to those who do not belong to them." He continued: "Schools are distinct units but, perhaps less obviously, so are individual classrooms. The boundaries around each, physical and sociological, affect the ways in which insiders and outsiders perceive and interact across them."

In addition to the structures, there are innumerable processes, relationships, and interactions—indeed antecedents, biographies, histories, and networks that shape and influence what gets done in

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schools, districts, classrooms, colleges, and universities, as well as other educational organizations. As regards the interactive and relational aspects of social life, Foucault (2008) would have us keep in mind that:

> *the state does not have an essence. The state is not a universe nor in itself an autonomous source of power. . . . The state has no heart, . . . no feelings, . . . it has no interior. The state is nothing else but the mobile effect of a regime of multiple governmentalities.* (p. 77).

Leaders, whether insiders or initially outsiders, inhabit and enact these roles (and more) in multidimensional organizational spatiotemporal units. Because of this complexity, a sociological and/or philosophical analytical disposition would serve the leader well (Wagner, 1990).

Concluding remarks

When thinking about leadership, particularly educational leadership, we pay attention to and, where possible, engage with Friedrich Nietzsche's (1968) observation on leadership that "it is not a matter of going ahead (for then one is at best a herdsman, i.e., the herd's chief requirement), but of being able *to go it alone*, of being able to be *different*" (p. 196, emphasis in original). The notion of the shepherd—and its counterpart, the farmer—is central to Hazony's (2012) interpretation of Hebrew scripture. In the scripture, the ideal forms of each are Abel, the shepherd, and Cain, the farmer. Hazony depicts the shepherd as more of an outsider, even an outlaw; guided by a morality rooted in responsibility to the family and the tribe (i.e., the community). Keeping in mind the concerns we raised regarding tribalism; the shepherd symbolizes and advocates for freedom. In contrast, the farmer—the builder, the one tied to the land in Hazony's

schema—is the backbone of the state and ultimately assumes the role of administrator.

We recognize the shepherd in the leader. This is why, in those fleeting moments when we confront the stark truth about what we do and who we are (and who we want to become), it seems disingenuous to write about leadership as if it were something one could see, touch, or do. For us, leadership is unfathomable, unrealizable, and perhaps even unimaginable. (Think of Arendt's [1958] characterization of action as interminable.[5]) Nietzsche (1968) exhorts the leader to be willing to go it alone, to be different. But how can one lead alone? Seldom do we speak of the followers. Leadership for us is a contingent practice, negotiated on a moment-to-moment basis with, between, and among all those who make up a group or organization. It is contractual, whether that contract is implicit or explicit (in reality, all or part of leadership contracts is implicit in an ethnomethodological sense [Garfinkel, 2002]). Leadership, as we envision it, finds parallels in Habermas' (1984) ideal speech situation, where each participant has the freedom to participate or not, free from coercion. In fact, the absence of coercion is a fundamental criterion for democratic, egalitarian relationships, organizations, and larger political entities.

In an egalitarian speech or leadership situation, individuals surrender some degree of their personal freedom to the group, as certain ones must follow while others do the work or take action (though leadership itself is also a form of action.) As a contingent practice, each member of the organization both leads and follows (sometimes even following

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[5] Here we also draw on Lakomski's (2005) arguments in *Managing without Leadership*.

their own leadership at different times and in different situations). This makes leadership more difficult than administration or management. True, managers manage people, which adds a degree of difficulty to the task or role. Administrators are ostensibly more role dependent and less contingent than leaders. Leaders, in contrast, negotiate their role *vis a vis* the group as a whole and the individual members of the group on a moment-to-moment basis. Leadership is messy, transient, and ephemeral. This is why we are skeptical of leadership theories, especially of leadership models and recipes. Indeed, there are no tried-and-true recipes. Leadership, to the extent it exists at all, is more like jazz improvisation and jazz dance (Newton, 2004). We are first and foremost people, dealing with people who are infinitely complex, which makes the codification of leadership impossible. Extant models tend to be developed post hoc, a posteriori (Waite, 2009). They are descriptive, often prescriptive, and can never be predictive. For us, leaders cannot be trained. Perhaps administrators can be trained, but we hold that leaders can be educated; and this is an entirely different matter.

Nietzsche and others before and after him (Bogotch, 2012; Waite, 2012) have noted the relation between knowledge and power: "Knowledge works as a tool of power. Hence it is plain that it increases with every increase of power" (1968, p. 266). Fewer have commented on how power manifests in the knowledge-teacher-learner relationship (for more on power and pedagogical relationships, see Biesta, 2014, and Rancière, 1991). As scholars, citizens, critics, members, and practitioners in the field of educational leadership, we are reluctant to place ourselves above others as teachers—or in Rancière's terms, as "the old Master"—who assume a superior, privileged position in relation to knowledge, thereby positioning others as inferior. Instead,

drawing on Biesta, we prefer to think of this relation as initiated by the student; those who choose to be taught by another.

In addition to Walzer's (2002) dispositions of the social critic and leader—courage, a keen eye, compassion, and now his fourth, a moral sense—we would add what we consider to be a fundamental trait of a good leader: humility, being humble. Leaders must, therefore, reflect on themselves, their attitudes and beliefs, their dispositions, and their actions. It begins with reflection (Waite, 2022), but who knows where it ends.

Considering the challenges discussed above and the theories explored, in what follows we outline some key considerations that should be taken not account in both educational practice and future research.

Some final implications for research and practice
This article highlights critical yet previously neglected perspectives in current discussions on education and educational leadership. Based on the reflections presented throughout the manuscript, several implications for both research and practice emerge that warrant consideration.

Recognizing leadership as an educational journey rather than mere training, and acknowledging its potential to enhance well-being, academic success, and more, we argue that programs for these professionals need to be rethought. They should emphasize critical thinking, reflective skills, and contextual awareness rooted in freedom and equity, while also strengthening social and communication skills that foster collaboration and uphold core values such as social justice and humility. Working groups, educational community meetings, and

partnerships between schools and social institutions can help identify practical challenges, gather relevant data, and inform the development of educational leadership programs. Additionally, feedback from educators, families, and students can contribute to improving these professional learning and support initiatives.

Researchers, as well, can deepen our understanding of educational leadership by critically evaluating evidence from studies with diverse strengths and limitations. In this regard, it is crucial that scholars assess the necessity of leadership education.

However, it is important to acknowledge that there is no recipe or "one-size-fits-all" for effective leadership, as it is a dynamic and constantly evolving construct, much like individuals and society. In this sense, leaders continuously face challenges in both their professional and personal lives, and there has never been a better time than now to transform these challenges into opportunities for meaningful action.

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An Analysis on Private School Teachers Being Scapegoated for Organizational Problems

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Abstract	Article Info
The purpose of this study is to explore the views of private school teachers regarding the organizational problems they encounter. This research employs a phenomenological design, which is a qualitative research model. The participants of the study include 20 teachers working in private schools in Ankara in the year 2023. The selection of participants, determined on a voluntary basis, was carried out using the criterion and snowball sampling methods which are the purposive sampling techniques. Data for the research were collected through a semi-structured interview form. In line with the themes identified based on the relevant literature for the purpose of the study, the collected data were analyzed using content analysis method. According to the research findings, the themes related to the organizational problems teachers indicated they experienced include job insecurity/ temporary contracts, inadequate salary, excessive workload, role ambiguity, mobbing, hindered and/or lack of decision-making participation, administrative pressure, and insufficient physical conditions. The study also revealed that teachers reported receiving explicit and/or implicit messages during their in-service training sessions in their schools, suggesting that these problems	

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were their fault and they were solely responsible for improving themselves. In addition, teachers reported that they were not involved in deciding on these training sessions. These findings highlight how teachers felt unfairly held responsible for challenges largely beyond their control, with little attention given to addressing the root causes of these problems. The research also concluded that teachers felt scapegoated as they are unfairly blamed, experienced occupational alienation and a sense of occupational burnout. Accordingly, it is recommended that organizational problems beyond teachers' control be addressed and resolved first in order to empower education rather than holding teachers responsible for these problems.

Cite as:

Introduction

According to the ideology of neoliberalism, which is a political-economic practice, the most effective way to increase human welfare is to establish a framework based on private property rights, free markets, and free trade, and to have this framework supported and protected by the government (Harvey, 2021). In this theory, the privatization of public services, the commodification and commercialization of humanity, and support through decisions dictated by those who manage international capital are essential (Kumar and Hill, 2009). Neoliberalism argues that the services provided by the state are expensive, uncompetitive and of low quality. Therefore, the involvement of the private sector is necessary to improve quality and to offer lower prices (Freeman, 2015). Harvey

(2021) has stated that neoliberal ideology operates under the assumptions of "a rising tide lifts all boats" and "wealth generated at the top trickles down". However, despite the rhetoric that focuses on the welfare of the people, in reality, it is the welfare of corporations that has taken precedence (Harvey, 2021).

One of the most distinct areas where the ideology of neoliberalism, which aims to privatize public institutions and create new opportunities for private investments through government policies, is felt is in the field of education (Hasting, 2019). With the commodification driven by neoliberal ideology, education, which has become both a battlefield and a marketplace, has pushed knowledge systems to be adjusted in a way that serves the needs of new forms of production processes (Kumar, 2015). Along with this ideology, need for a new society has emerged, and education has been used as a means to meet this need (Sever, 2017).

The effects of neoliberalism, which began to manifest itself in the world after the 1970s, can be particularly observed in Turkey, especially after the 1980s (Ünal, 2005). These effects gained momentum, especially with the structural adjustment and stabilization programs implemented in 1980, and privatization initiatives in education started to emerge through campaigns like "Build Your Own School" (Şentürk, 2010). One of the fundamental principles of Turkish National Education, the principle of "Equal Opportunities in Education," has seen a broader inequality in its definition (Ünal & Özsoy, 1999) with the reduction of the education right to market and commerce (Şentürk, 2010). Along with the process of commodifying education, one of the inequalities that occurred in education is the commercialization of education. The concept of rights-based understanding of education has

been replaced by a power and favouritism-based understanding of education. With this approach, educational inequalities emerged in a society where economic inequalities were also prevalent (Ural, 2022). The inequality already present in individuals' income and wealth distribution has, in turn, deepened both social inequality and inequality in education regarding access to educational services (Ünal & Özsoy, 1999). Furthermore, as Freeman (2015) points out, neoliberal ideology prioritizes market forces over the well-being of children. This neglect often leaves low-income families unable to afford quality education for their children, leading to significant educational, health, and skill deficits among disadvantaged youth. This disadvantage perpetuates a cycle of inequality, hindering their future prospects. The reduction of the right to education to a commodity within the market has led to a questioning of the concept of the welfare state (Şentürk, 2010). The neoliberal approach, viewing education as a distinct area of investment, has not only legitimized the commodification of educational services and teachers' work but has also facilitated the intensification of market principles in all areas of education, including the management of schools, thereby giving rise to a new form of corporate management (Ertürk, 2018).

As a result of the commodification of education, various commodities such as private schools, tutoring centres, courses, and private lessons have emerged, and teachers have been reduced to the position of sellers, with students' success being determined by constantly increasing numbers of exams. The competitive environment for students also became applicable to teachers, and teachers were pushed into the role of workers by dividing their labour into various tasks (Keskin Demirer, 2012). The teacher that the neoliberal ideology wanted to mould has become exam-oriented and has been turned into

a technician of a corporatized education system. This position to which teachers were pushed has led to the erosion of their professional reputation and the loss of their autonomy (Yıldız, 2013) as neoliberal education policies not only question teacher competence but also distance teachers from their professional identities, transforming them into technicians. Giroux (2010) stated that this ideology seeks not to create economic, social, and pedagogical conditions for teachers but rather to deskill them and prioritize standardization over creativity. The emergence of standardization in education negatively affects not only the quality of learning but also the quality of teachers (Ünal, 2005), and thus the role of teacher is devalued. The neoliberal ideology seeks to transform teachers, whose professional autonomy has been taken away, into technicians who must be constantly monitored (Yıldız et al., 2014). Giroux (2013) described this new position of teachers as high-level technicians who implement orders and decisions given by experts who are disconnected from the realities of classroom life. Along with this approach, the freedom of teachers has started to be taken away by making them a part of exploitation. Teachers have gradually been de-professionalized (Vatansever & Yalçın, 2015). They have been exposed to precarious working conditions, subjected to various tests and mobbing to conform to standards, and pushed towards occupational burnout (Ural, 2017).

In the neoliberal ideology that emphasizes personal responsibility, failures have often been associated with personal faults, and individuals are frequently chosen as scapegoats and blamed (Harvey, 2021). Kumashiro (2012) has expressed that the de-professionalization of teachers is defined as being a bad teacher. Kumashiro (2012) has suggested that teachers are turned into scapegoats to eliminate the bigger picture, and highlights the significant role of language in

masking the truth. In addition, the concept of a scapegoat is one of the long-standing primitive definitions, representing the sacrifice of something or someone else to rid oneself of trouble, problems, or evil and a concept that emerges from the psychology of searching for a scapegoat rather than finding the root cause of the problem (Akar Erbil, 2022). Throughout history, humans have shown a tendency to search for someone to blame for guilt and feelings of wrongdoing stemming from evil and troubles (Campbell, 2012). Scapegoating is often a projection in which a person attributes their own desires or traits to others (Orçin, 2022). According to Frazer (2019), the primitive belief that a physical burden can be transferred onto someone else has led to the notion of transferring sins and suffering to another being. Campbell (2012) stated that it results from avoiding responsibility for one's action. Kumashiro (2012) defines the situation where teachers are scapegoated as the constant questioning of teachers and holding them responsible for organizational problems that are beyond their control. He also adds that language is a powerful way to mask certain realities. By overstating a minor issue and blaming individuals who are actually crucial to the solution, accountability is avoided, and responsibility is disregarded. Thus, the entire foundation of education depends on teachers (Kumashiro, 2012).

Teachers who have been held responsible for any failing in education are largely among the ones affected by burnout (Ural, 2010). Robbins (2023) has listed the reasons for teachers' occupational burnout as the lack of adequate support at the workplace, overwhelming workload, the intensity of exams, time pressure, behavioural issues in students, and the lack of sufficient resources to meet students' needs. While discussing the negative impact of the stress and occupational burnout experienced by teachers on students, on the other hand, the sources of

stress experienced by teachers are being overlooked. In the system where students are seen as investment objects, teachers are often scapegoated for problems arising from fundamental issues such as inadequate classroom resources and lack of support staff, insufficient administrative support and lack of participation in decision-making and unpaid overtime (Robbins, 2023). The traditional understanding that a teacher is as good as the amount of information they can fill students with has been defined by Freire (2004) as the "banking model of education." In this model, teachers are seen as investors and students as objects of investment. In this model, which emphasizes memorization, but lacks dialogue, and questioning, the acquisition of knowledge is evaluated through a series of exams (Freire, 2004). Today, the perception of evaluating knowledge through exams places the responsibility for poor exam results squarely on the shoulders of teachers. In cases of educational failure, the blame is placed either directly on the teacher or on the teacher's training (Thomas, 2019). In the last decade, teachers have become a profession subjected to constant criticism. Among the aggressive criticisms directed at teachers are claims that they cannot teach students effectively, cannot control violence among students, and are not professional in demanding fair pay. When schools turn into battlefields, teachers are not only accused of starting the war but also of profiting from the spoils (Farber and Miller, 1981).

Under the influence of neoliberal education policies, the teacher is being transformed into an image that is constantly discussed and shaped to serve ideological purposes. Sub-disciplines of educational sciences such as the sociology of education, the economics of education, and education policy are ignored, and teachers are subjected to various training programs to be developed into technical

personnel who meet performance criteria (Ünal, 2005). Since the 1983 Nation at Risk report, countless studies and national reports have presented the low quality of teachers as one of the main problems faced by schools. Critics hold teachers responsible for many societal deficiencies, which has led to the development of various programs aimed at improving teacher quality in recent years (Ingersoll, 2007). These programs are delivered to teachers through in-service training in schools. In these training sessions, even if the issues are organizational, the focus is often on what teachers can do about them. Teachers, who are emphasized to be developed and made resilient by various sources, increasingly face professional alienation. Seeman's (1959) theory of alienation focuses on social stimuli as the cause of alienation. Influenced by Marxist sociological principles, this theory defines alienation as feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation, and self-estrangement resulting from social, organizational, or interpersonal problems (Seeman, 1959). Teachers are expected to improve themselves, overlooking the organizational problems occurring beyond their control. As teachers are expected to assume various roles simultaneously, they experience professional alienation as a result.

Based on these explanations, scapegoating the teacher in this study refers to holding the teacher responsible for issues at the workplace that do not originate from the teacher. Instead of addressing problems arising from conditions such as job insecurity, low wages, excessive workload, role ambiguity, bullying, non-democratic environments, and administrative pressure, the focus is placed on highlighting the inadequacy of teachers. This approach continually brings the teacher's competence into question. By emphasizing the teacher's inadequacy,

the term is used to describe the act of concealing, covering up, or making the real problem invisible.

In the literature on organizational problems, various factors have been identified as contributing to challenges faced by employees in educational settings. However, the categorization of these factors has often been broad and general. To provide a more structured understanding of the issues affecting teachers, this study introduces refined categorization of organizational problems.

The factors identified in this research are grouped into *three main categories*: factors related to the job and task, factors related to the environment and working conditions, and factors related to the organizational structure. This categorization was developed based on the specific context of the study. These categories not only help to clarify the organizational challenges teachers face but also serve to explain how these challenges may impact both their job satisfaction and sense of commitment to the organization. Job satisfaction refers to a pleasurable or positive emotional state that arises from evaluating one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976). Enhancing employees' job satisfaction can lead to a higher level of commitment to their work (Wang, 2024). The factors related to the job and task include the scope of the job, role conflict, role ambiguity, excessive workload, empowerment, and learning opportunities. Factors related to the environment and working conditions include organizational culture, physical conditions, internal communication, managerial relationships, morale, and job satisfaction. Additionally, inadequate physical environments negatively affect employees' performance and commitment, making it necessary to arrange working conditions in ways that enhance motivation (Paşa, 2007; Aydın, 2008). Factors related to the organizational structure include sub-factors such as

unionization, organizational image, wage system, non-wage benefits, flexible working hours, performance system, and career opportunities (Türker, 2009). Employees want to trust the institution they work for, be able to plan for the future, and be confident that they will not lose their status and the associated rights (Sabuncuoğlu & Tüz, 2005).

In this regard, the aim of this study is to explore the views of private school teachers regarding the organizational problems they face.

To achieve this aim, the following questions have been addressed:

1. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from job and task- related factors?
2. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from environmental and working conditions- related factors?
3. What are the views of private school teachers on the problems arising from organizational structure- related factors?
4. What are the views of private school teachers on the in-service training provided in their organizations?

Method

In this descriptive study, the phenomenological design, one of the qualitative research models, was used. The reason for using the qualitative research method in this study stems from its nature as an inquiry-based, interpretative approach that seeks to understand the form of the problem in its natural setting (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Klenke, 2016). Additionally, the qualitative research method provides a deeper perception related to the problem being studied (Morgan, 1996).

Phenomenological studies observe the experiences that individuals have regarding a specific phenomenon and the meanings they attach

to these experiences in order to comprehend and explain the phenomenon. The fundamental question of phenomenological research is often expressed as, "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the experience that individuals or groups have regarding a phenomenon?" These studies represent a qualitative approach aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of individuals' specific experiences and exploring the core and meaning of these experiences (Creswell, 2007). To answer this central question, researchers interact with individuals, gather information about their experiences, and attempt to understand the underlying meanings and structures of these experiences. This allows researchers to gain deeper insights into individuals' experiences (Karadavut, 2022). In phenomenological research, the focus is on describing the essence of individuals' lived experiences rather than their different perceptions (Limberg, 2008). In this qualitative study, a semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. The interview form, prepared by the researchers, consists of four sections. The first section consists of questions about the demographic information of the participants. The second section contains questions about organizational problems, prepared with consideration of the literature. The third section focuses on questions regarding the in-service training the participants received in their respective schools. Finally, the fourth section includes additional information the participants wish to express outside the scope of the preceding sections.

After the interview form was prepared by the researchers, it was reviewed by four experts, and revisions were made based on their feedback. The participants of the study consisted of 20 teachers working at the primary and secondary levels in private schools in Ankara in 2023. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling

methods, was used to select the participants. Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases, ensuring the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This approach focuses on identifying and selecting individuals or groups with significant knowledge or experience related to a specific phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The key point in criterion sampling is that the selected cases should be rich in terms of providing information (Marshall, 1996). The main criterion for this study was that the participants must be working in private schools. To identify and reach teachers working in different private schools, snowball sampling method was also applied.

Snowball or chain sampling is used in situations where it is difficult to access the units that make up the population or when there is insufficient information about the population, such as its size or the depth of knowledge (Patton, 2005). This technique focuses on individuals or critical situations from which rich data can be obtained, and it reaches the population by following these individuals and critical situations (Creswell, 2013). The participants voluntarily participated in the study and signed an informed consent form before the research process began. The information about the teachers in the study group is as shown in Table 1.

Participants

Table 1.
Information about the teachers in the study group

Code	Seniority(year)	Department	School Level
P1	15	Art	Primary
P2	2	English	Primary
P3	1	Turkish	Primary-Middle

P4	7	English	High School
P5	9	English	Primary
P6	14	Maths	Middle
P7	9	English	Primary
P8	10	English	High School
P9	16	Science	Middle
P10	34	English	High School
P11	10	English	Middle-High
P12	11	English	Primary
P13	10	Preschool	Preschool
P14	3	English	High School
P15	6	Turkish	Middle-High
P16	7	English	Primary
P17	4	Guidance	Primary
P18	8	Classroom	Primary
P19	8	Chemistry	High School
P20	8	English	High School

To ensure the confidentiality of participants' real names, codes such as P1, P2, P3, etc., were used. Direct quotations from the participants' responses were included under relevant themes.

The data obtained from the interviews with participants were analyzed using the content analysis method. According to Krippendorff (2018), content analysis is a systematic approach for analyzing textual data, aiming to identify patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. First, the collected data were organized according to the sub-objectives of the research, and sub-themes were developed based on the main themes identified during the initial stages of analysis. These themes

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were derived from the participants' responses and were continuously refined as the analysis progressed. Content analysis involves both a descriptive phase, where the data is categorized, and an interpretative phase, where deeper meanings and connections are explored. The sub-themes were then interpreted in relation to the data gathered from the participants' responses, allowing for a deeper understanding of the underlying patterns and meanings in their views. Patton (2002) suggests that an interesting and readable report provides enough description to enable the reader to understand the basis for an interpretation, and enough interpretation to help the reader understand the description.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the methods used in this research have been rigorously addressed to ensure the study's strong foundations and consistent results. According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), in qualitative research, validity and reliability are not simply about replicability, but about ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and the context under study. They highlight that the credibility of qualitative research depends on the researcher's ability to present findings that truly represent the lived experiences of the participants. Thus, the methods used in this study were designed

to enhance both the validity and reliability of the findings, ensuring they are reflective of the participants' views and the research context.

Validity

The internal validity of the study relies on the consistency of the process during data collection and analysis. In this study, a semi-structured interview form was used to collect valid data that align with the research questions. Each section of the interview form was designed to serve the purpose of the study, ensuring that the data collected from participants could address the research questions effectively. The validity of the semi-structured interview form used as the data collection tool was ensured through feedback from four subject matter experts. The experts reviewed the content of the interview form and confirmed that it was aligned with the research objectives and contained important topics consistent with the literature. This helped ensure the appropriateness and validity of the data collection tool. Phenomenological studies aim to understand participants' specific experiences, and therefore, external validity (the ability to generalize findings) is often limited. However, the results of this study may provide meaningful insights for similar groups of teachers. Thus, the external validity of this study holds limited for

generalization to similar educational contexts but can offer valuable perspectives on teachers' experiences in private schools.

Reliability

Reliability was ensured by carefully designing the data collection process to obtain consistent and repeatable results. The semi-structured interview form was prepared to align with the research questions, and the same questions were asked to all participants. Additionally, the interviews were recorded, which facilitated accurate data analysis and minimized potential errors during the data collection process. The reliability of the data analysis process was enhanced through a collaborative coding approach among the researchers. The data obtained through content analysis were grouped according to predefined themes, and the main themes and sub-themes were interpreted systematically in line with the participants' responses. This ensured consistency and reliability in analyzing the data. During the data analysis stage, inter-rater reliability was also ensured through the consistency of coding and theme creation among different researchers. Agreement between researchers on certain themes were strengthened the reliability of the data analysis. This process contributed to ensuring the trustworthy interpretation of the data and reinforced the overall reliability of the study.

Results

Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Job and Task-Related Factors

Excessive Workload

The vast majority of participants have mentioned the intensity of teaching hours, the continuous preparation of additional materials, parent meetings, projects, duties, and an overwhelming workload. They stated that due to the excessive workload, they cannot find time for themselves and feel exhausted. Some participants, however, have stated that this situation may vary depending on the attitude of the schools.

"I think there is a very heavy workload both physically and mentally. The physical exhaustion causes me to feel unenthusiastic. Because of this, I find it challenging, and I feel that I won't be able to continue this profession for many years. I believe that I'll need to find different paths when the time comes." (P13)

"The workload is burdening me to a level where it affects my social life, personal life, and family life both during and outside working hours. Within the official working hours when I don't have classes, I find myself obligated to handle administrative tasks, conduct parent-teacher meetings, or complete paperwork. Additionally, I am required to fulfill my duty without any extra payment. The guard duty program at our institution includes 10-minute shifts we keep during breaks between classes and the 55-minute shifts we take during lunch breaks. After performing these duties, I don't feel efficient in any of the classes I attend. The intensity and excessiveness of my workload, the tasks that I perform requiring the effort of two individuals without

exaggeration, overshadow my primary role as a teacher. This leads to not only physical exhaustion but also causes me to feel demoralized and mentally drained beyond measure. Most importantly, it makes me question my professional satisfaction. When I evaluate my living standards and my physical, mental, and emotional well-being, I frequently find myself wondering if it's all worth it." (P5)

"Since I am a native teacher, the school wants me to teach classes at all levels. My teaching workload is excessive!" (P11)

Role Ambiguity

Majority of the participants expressed that they are compelled to perform various roles in private schools. This situation leads to role ambiguity and makes them feel more like employees of the institution rather than professionals in their field. In addition, it is clear that students are seen as investment objects in these schools from the participant's view.

"Everyone is obliged to do everything." (P8)

"I've been working at a private school for 8 years. Over these 8 years, I had to take on many roles. On one hand, you are expected to be a disciplined teacher, and on the other, you should be a student coach who closely monitors the students. At the same time, you have to make calls to parents a few times a month to ensure their satisfaction and even invite them to the school for a cup of tea, making you feel like you have to become a public relations expert or a secretary instead of just being a teacher. They also say that students and parents are customers, so you're forced to act as a representative of the school." (P19)

Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Environmental and Working Conditions- Related Factors

Mobbing

Most participants mentioned that they face mobbing in the form of pressure from administrators when they resist doing tasks outside their job description, control of breaks, including coffee breaks, and calculating their time, as well as being blamed for not meeting parent satisfaction standards. They also mentioned experiences of sexist behaviour. Especially female teachers feel the gender discrimination.

"Constant surveillance and any minor problem being seen as the teacher's fault is perceived as a form of intimidation." (P2)

"Also, having a contract presented to us every year creates a climate of fear. If a parent talks to the administration, they believe the parent and criticise me. Parents interfere too much. For the sake of parent satisfaction, the teacher is seen as wrong." (P10)

"I believe that I and some of my teacher colleagues are systematically subjected to mobbing in this regard. The principal particularly exhibits a sexist attitude towards female teachers and persistently targets them. Imagine a principal who proudly recounts making teachers cry with laughter." (P19)

Prevention of Decision-making Participation

Some participants mention that they have never been involved in decision-making processes and are obliged to implement decisions made by the management. Others note that while some level of participation is allowed, it is not to the extent desired.

"There are no suggestions or opinions taken from the teacher about the work to be done within the school or in the classroom. There is no right to oppose excessive workload or not to perform a given task, even if it is not included in the job description." (P18)

"Generally, the founder or the principal makes a decision regarding the operation, and decisions are presented under the name of things to be done. So far, I don't think teachers' opinions have been considered much. In my own experience as a guidance counsellor, my opinion has often been sought in making educational decisions." (P17)

Administrative Pressure

Analysis of the participants' views reveals that they are subjected to administrative pressure related to excessive workload and the need to complete all tasks on time, as well as pressure regarding students' academic performance. Teachers are also subject to control in any educational process.

"There are often coercive administrative attitudes about how a lesson should be taught, including the methods, techniques, assessment methods, and even the content of the lesson, considering parents' expectations and socio-cultural levels. There is strict control over student grades, assignments, and exam results." (P9)

"Pressure is created in various areas, from completing textbooks to talking to parents on the phone every two weeks. Positive behaviours and achievements are not praised, while the slightest deficiency becomes a subject of reprimand." (P4)

Inadequate Physical Conditions

The majority of participants mentioned that private schools' physical conditions are inadequate, considering the fees paid by students and the expected level of work.

"The teacher's room being disorganized, the need for computers, non-functional or damaged technological devices, struggling to teach when smart boards need replacement, having to go four floors up and down for basic needs like buying tea and coffee during short breaks, lack of proper ventilation and heating in winter, teaching materials that don't match classroom levels, improper storage of the outputs of activities and work, teachers having to use their private phones and computers for work, and not providing a genuinely quiet working environment for teachers are some of the problems they face." (P6)

"Providing only one low-quality meal, a cramped teacher's room, and a school that is like an apartment where socializing is impossible." (P14)

Findings on Problems Private School Teachers Face Due to Organizational Structure Related Factors

Insecure Employment

According to participant views, fixed-term employment contracts generally create feelings of fear of unemployment, concerns about being left without a salary, and anxiety about the future among participants.

"Job security is a crucial issue for maintaining a certain order and stability in one's working life. In today's private sector organizations, the increasing downsizing, restructuring of institutions or organizational changes can lead

to many people becoming unemployed. Even in institutions where you have been working for a long time, when you reach a certain contract date, you may experience concerns about unemployment. Alternatively, delays in job interviews and contract dates can occur in private institutions, leading to uncertainty. This also creates ambiguity because not knowing whether or not an event will happen makes decisions and responses related to the event uncertain. The uncertainty about how much longer the job will continue affects the decisions individuals make about their future negatively. Furthermore, changes that lead to a decline in employee rights and earnings concerning the nature of work and working conditions also increase job insecurity." (P1)

It is understood that the fear of unemployment leads to inefficiency among teachers. Some private schools have been known to exploit this situation for mobbing, as mentioned by the participants:

"The fear of being laid off at any moment and mobbing implemented through the use of fixed-term contracts." (P16)

"As someone in my first year of my career, this situation is very uncertain for me right now. It seems that I won't receive a salary for 2 months in the 10-month contract. I'm worried about how I will get by during this period." (P3)

Insufficient Salaries
Most of the participants state that the work they do in private schools does not align with the salaries they receive. They perceive offering teachers the minimum or slightly above minimum wage as a devaluation of the teaching profession. It was also mentioned that the insufficiency of salaries is related to the profit-seeking nature of private

schools. Furthermore, it is understood that the inadequate salaries reduce the motivation of teachers.

"The inadequacy of teacher salaries causes a significant loss of motivation among teachers and makes it difficult for teachers to dedicate themselves to their work." (P2)

"Although students help ease our existing problems, due to insufficient salaries, one's mind is preoccupied with rent and bills. This not only affects productivity but also takes a psychological toll." (P15)

"In many countries around the world, teachers are considered to be among the lowest-paid workers in society, and the situation is no different in our country. Since it is illegal to offer the minimum wage, private institutions pay their teachers slightly more than the minimum wage regardless of their professional seniority. Institutions make employment decisions by looking at how much additional workload a senior teacher is willing to take on for the given salary rather than considering what they will bring to the institution. It is questionable how much can be expected from a teacher who lives from hand to mouth in terms of being productive in class. The salaries of teachers trying to make ends meet are definitely inadequate in today's conditions." (P7)

Findings on In-Service Trainings Provided by Organization

The participants expressed that, despite the awareness of how important and challenging the teaching profession is, there is no effort to improve the conditions, and all the responsibility is placed on the teacher. They stated that they receive in-service training which hasn't been decided by them. In addition, teachers added that during these training sessions, they were implied how good conditions they have.

"Our training courses and decisions about them were always made by the upper administration, and we teachers were constantly summoned and put to work like labourers. I worked in a private school for 5 years, but no one ever said, "The teacher is right." Parents, students, department heads, and the school principal were always seen as right, while the teacher, who actually did the work, was always seen as wrong. The work they did was always belittled, and they were never thanked for their efforts and achievements." (P16)

"I have attended similar training sessions. The common problem with these trainings is that they are far from meeting the needs of the teachers. The content of these trainings is shaped by the school administration, as proper needs analysis is either not well-executed or not desired. Involving teachers in the decision-making process is a problem that is often overlooked. When it comes to educational partnership, teachers, who are right at the centre of problems, pressure, and resilience, are the ones left out on the periphery in private schools." (P20)

"The mentioned training programs suffer from serious issues regarding the decision-makers and the content. Encountering negative aspects such as emphasizing their inadequacies diminishes our motivation and hinders the training programs from achieving their goals. While training on psychological support or stress management acknowledges the significant stress involved in this profession, there is a lack of efforts to improve the situation. Teachers are only expected to accept and cope with this situation by receiving training. Additionally, I believe there should be transparency in the decision-makers for these training programs, and teachers should be actively involved in these decisions. Teachers should have an active role in choosing the training they receive, and the topics should be determined in accordance with the actual needs of the teachers. "(P14)

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"The management makes the decisions. These are generally training programs that have no relation to the actual needs. The person attending the training is given the message that "you are in good conditions" even if the conditions in other schools are worse, which is incorrect. There are always better or worse institutions. People who do not know how to communicate or even establish basic communication in daily life become principals, supervisors, or teachers" (P12)

In the *"**Other Factors**"* section, the majority of participants did not feel the need to add any additional factors, but some who did add comments expressed concerns about teachers' morale, motivation, and feelings of being undervalued.

"Teachers' morale and motivation are never considered. In every kind of negativity, the teacher is seen as the primary responsible party. Even in positive situations, the success is not attributed to our teacher, and not even a simple "thank you" is expressed to teachers through words or actions. Inadequate attention is paid to in-service training activities or not attending them, as well as the ineffectiveness of the training sessions. We work with administrators not having the necessary qualifications, administrators who see teachers as pawns and try to drag teachers along with themselves, administrators allowing teachers to be oppressed to retain customers. Meetings on education and teaching are not taken seriously and lack seriousness." (P5)

"During the pandemic, while schools were supposed to open for two days, our entire class was open for 5 days a week. After receiving reactions, the class was divided into two groups, and we attended school for 4 days. Later, we were asked to conduct online lessons during our free hours for those who couldn't come to school. As first-grade teachers, we attended face-to-face

lessons for 20 hours and additionally conducted 14 hours of online lessons. Despite all this, we received short-time work allowance. Our social security premium days are recorded as 10 days. That year, we were forced to sign a document stating "we have received all our rights during the pandemic" in order to make a new contract. However, such a situation never occurred. As a classroom teacher pursuing a doctorate, I reflect my knowledge and experience to my students. I closely monitor both their academic and social development. In return, I feel neither financially nor spiritually valued. I feel sad, angry, worthless, and tired. I am becoming alienated from my profession in the private school." (P18)

"During working hours, it is considered a taboo to be on the school grounds, even if you have no classes." (P4)

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the responses of the research participants, it is evident that teachers working in private schools are subjected to various challenges. Teachers who lack job security, receive insufficient pay—some even working for minimum wage—and face issues such as administrative pressure and mobbing, find their efforts devalued, and they are not provided with an environment where they can express themselves. This growing issue leads to teachers becoming alienated (Seeman, 1959) from their profession and experiencing professional burnout. Ural (2010) also expressed that teachers are in one of the most affected groups by burnout. When examining the participants' statements, it appears that teachers, constantly under pressure, are struggling to secure basic living conditions while simultaneously performing their duties under oppressive and authoritarian attitudes. These schools, driven by commercial concerns, reduce students and parents to the role of customers, education to a product, and teachers

to salespeople. Those who fail to meet performance expectations or sales quotas face pressure or are pushed out of the system.

The tendency to focus on teachers when any issue arises in education can be seen as a manifestation of the scapegoating psychology. Kumashiro (2012) also indicated that scapegoating the teachers is a means to distort the bigger picture. Teachers, labelled as scapegoats, are often subjected to various in-service training programs in private schools, where the language used makes them feel inadequate. It is observed that these in-service programs emphasize that teachers are in favourable conditions, ignoring the difficulties and problems they face. As a result, teachers are reduced to mere executors of what is given to them as Ünal (2005) stated. Participants also express that the undervaluation of their labour and efforts, along with the reduction of their role to that of technicians as Ural (2010) mentioned, is a recurring theme.

Additionally, it is noted that the increasing commercial concerns in schools lead to unrealistic expectations of teachers. These training sessions reinforce the perception among participants that teachers are the ones who need to improve themselves. Thomas (2019) emphasized that teachers are being subjected as their education is not considered. For this reason, it is thought that teachers are the ones who should improve themselves. Similar results were found in a case study conducted in Bursa on the working conditions of private school teachers. The study highlighted issues such as excessive teaching loads, long working hours, lack of salary guarantees, and the perception by parents that teachers are "there because of their money," which leads to the devaluation of teachers and the teaching profession (Demirler, 2020). In another study by Ergen and Çokkeser (2022), it was

concluded that private school teachers work long hours, receive inadequate pay, and experience devaluation of their profession, while parents' high expectations cause role confusion. Furthermore, a study by Cerev and Coşkun (2020) on the working problems of private school teachers found that teachers face issues with administration, parents, and students, receive insufficient pay, and lack job security.

According to the participants' views, it is observed that teachers working in private schools are exposed to various challenges. These teachers are held accountable for everything even if it is beyond their control. Additionally, they face issues such as administrative pressure and mobbing. As Freire (1970) stated, they are the oppressed in the education system. Their intensive efforts are devalued (Buyruk, 2015), and it is noted that they are not provided with an environment where they can express themselves. This growing problem leads to teachers becoming increasingly detached from their profession. Apple (2021) states that teachers are increasingly being deskilled in schools due to the rising technical control procedures in curricula. As a result, teachers find themselves in an uncertain position between classes, resembling the bourgeoisie in terms of the status of the profession, while also being similar to the working class due to the de-professionalization of the teaching profession (Apple, 2021). This phenomenon is addressed differently by Standing (2014), who refers to this group as the "precariat," a new, dangerous class. Including individuals from different sectors, Precariat is a group formed as a result of commodification, marketization, insecurity, and labour exploitation (Standing, 2014). This group includes people from all walks of life who experience insecurity.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that teachers can also be considered part of the precariat. Another research emphasizes the significant effects of neoliberal policies on Turkey's educational system and the teaching profession, highlighting the insecure employment conditions teachers experience due to market-driven transformations (Başaran et al., 2024).

Instead of addressing and reducing organizational problems, private schools tend to focus on providing in-service training to teachers, thus making them the subject of the issues. These schools often hold teachers responsible for many of the challenges within educational organizations. The language used in such training sessions is not aimed at resolving the problems teachers face but rather at transforming them into stronger individuals in the face of these challenges. Expecting teachers, who are burdened with excessive workloads, insufficient pay, mobbing, and temporary contracts, to undertake the serious task of educating society is far from realistic. Teachers who are unable to achieve job satisfaction, feel stressed and pressured, believe they are undervalued, and lack confidence in their future will need the conditions that caused these issues to be improved before they can feel physically, emotionally, and psychologically well.

The teacher, who has been turned into a technician by neoliberal economic ideology, has gradually lost their autonomy and is now expected to exert influence without being granted authority. Held accountable and blamed for all shortcomings in education, the teacher struggles with these challenges while simultaneously fulfilling the critical task of educating society. In order for the teacher to regain their role in education and to increase the quality of education, analyses should first be made regarding the root causes of these problems, and

the teacher should be given back the status they deserve. Problems that arise from sources such as school administration, parents, and students—issues not caused by teachers—must be resolved by those responsible so that teachers can continue in their profession. Teachers should be recognized as experts in their field and should participate in educational practices with the respect that their professional status requires.

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Research on Educational Leadership and Management in China since 2000s: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract	Article Info
Purpose: *The author conducts a systematic review study focusing on educational leadership and management (EDLM) in mainland China. This article aims to describe research characteristics concerning publication volume, authorship, research topics, research methodologies, as well as leadership and management features found in the research, involving contextual intervention, leader's role, and leader-follower interaction.* ***Methods:*** *PRISMA was used in the source identification and data extraction from two international databases, one Chinese academic database, and "core" journals in this field. In total, 459 journal articles were included for analysis in the period between 2000 and 2024.* ***Findings:*** *This review draws a holistic picture of major patterns of EDLM knowledge production in China by highlighting the connections and differences compared to similar reviews in other countries or regions. Notably, the findings identified that more than half of the studies had been published in the past three years, indicating that this topic received emerging attention recently. The prevalence of quantitative literature indicates that many scholars attach importance to empirical data, and reveals a research gap in qualitative exploration for a comprehensive understanding of leaders' experiences.*	

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Value: This study contributes to the landscape of leadership and management in China and connects it to the international literature, which provides sustaining power for the EDLM knowledge base.

Introduction

Educational leadership and management (EDLM) gained growing attention in the past decades due to educational policymakers' and leaders' increasingly diverse responsibilities associated with today's transformation in education. The necessity of region- or nation-based systematic reviews was highlighted, as it can enrich knowledge in this field and facilitate the implementation of educational leadership into practice in a certain context (Hallinger & Bryant, 2013). Hence, the amount of review research in EDLM has significantly risen worldwide, for instance, in Malaysia (Adams et al., 2023), Turkey (Gümüş et al., 2020), Latin America (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018), and Africa (Hallinger, 2017). Nevertheless, reviews that provide a general understanding of the current features of EDLM in China remain relatively limited.

Education leaders must perform various managerial and leading roles in different aspects, including human resources, funding, teacher professional development, and teaching and learning activities, as well as maintaining internal relations within the organization and

establishing external cooperation (Bush, 2020; Hallinger, 2013). The impacts performed by their roles on organizational effectiveness and individuals' development have been widely recognized (Bush & Glover, 2014; Leithwood, et al. 2004). Educational leaders and management teams have strong power to offer a positive context for teachers and students, facilitating student learning achievements, supporting staff members' work, and positively influencing organizational policy and processes (Gümüş et al., 2020; Hallinger, 2013; 2017). However, evidence on how Chinese educational leaders perform these functions remains scarce. It calls for an urgent need to conduct locally based systematic reviews in China, where there might be a few research articles written in its indigenous language.

Existing comparison of Chinese EDLM with other countries identified that international diversity and cross-cultural backgrounds caused several differences in requirements and responsibilities for local leaders (Huang, 2018; Wang & Chen, 2021). As educational management and leadership belongs to a complicated and multi-dimensional field, researchers argued that having diverse perspectives and adding research differentiated by environments can benefit EDLM understanding (Wang & Gao, 2022; Hallinger & Chen, 2015). Thus, it is necessary to provide a general EDLM picture for Chinese policymakers and educational leaders to draw on Western experiences (Chen & Bos, 2023), as well as to introduce knowledge of educational leadership and management in China to the international community (Walker & Qian, 2015).

Considering that the cultural and organizational contexts in various societies affect the understanding and implementation of leadership and management, it would be vital to supplement nation-based systematic reviews of literature across different cultural settings,

especially in a country like China with rapid transformation and distinct characteristics (Liu, Wang, & Liang, 2019; Yang 2021). The literature gap and practical necessity of a topographical review have prompted the current research on EDLM in China. This study aims to advance the existing body of knowledge by systematically reviewing the multifaceted aspects, moving beyond the narrow focus on principal-centric analysis to a broader range of topics with interconnected factors, such as regional policy, organizational behavior, management teams' practices and cultural hybridization. This study could enrich the global EDLM discourse by collectively redefining the evolving sociopolitical landscape in China, providing a more comprehensive and contextually relevant understanding of EDLM that extends existing research frameworks.

1. What are the publication characteristics of Chinese educational leadership and management concerning the volume, authorship, and journal distribution?

2. What are the characteristics of Chinese educational leadership and management research concerning research approach, research region, and research topic?

3. What are the key features of educational leadership and management practices in China regarding organizational context, individual ability, and interactions?

desired values in universities.

Literature review

Defining leadership or management in education is not easy, since there are no completely consistent definitions available. An early accepted conceptualization of educational leadership is "a social

influence process whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person/group over other people/groups to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organization" (Yukl, 2002; p3). Management in education is widely viewed as "coordination and control of the organization undertaken by persons holding formal administrative roles" (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018, p2). Although EDLM has a short past as a discipline (Ribbins, 2007), the tendency to focus on the interrelationship between these two paradigms is gradually clarifying the confusion. Such as, Bush (2020)'s book identified links between educational management theories and leadership models, Hallinger and Kovačević (2019)'s research revealed a paradigm transformation from "administration" to "leadership", and Adam et al. (2023)'s studies emphasized both formal management power and leadership influence. Hence, a combination of leadership and management studies meet the global research trend in EDLM.

Referred to the previous nation-based or region-based reviews that focused on leaders' influences and duties from an inclusive perspective (Adams et al., 2023; Hallinger, 2017; Hallinger & Hammad, 2019), this article explores leadership or management roles connectedly instead of differences between these concepts. Previous research has identified a broader range of educational leaders' responsibilities in work, including strategic vision and planning, curriculum reform, staff development, resource management, student support, facilitation construction, etc. (Bush, 2020; Yukl, 2002). Thus, this review does not limit the scope of organization type, such as the school or university setting, but conducts source inclusion based on leaders' roles to some extent to understand the existing focused content better.

Scholars characterized the period as consolidation since the 2000s with a rapidly increasing phase of EDLM research, showing a transfer from Anglo-American-European centered to globally distributed scholarship (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Ribbins, 2007). The scholarship development from the 2010s was regarded as the internationalization period with emerging regional and international reviews and geographically diversified researchers (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018; Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019). The rationale for selecting this timeframe is that EDLM began to attract obviously growing research interests in China also since then (Walker & Qian, 2012; 2015).

Researchers have pointed out that the current body of knowledge of educational leadership and management mainly relies on English-speaking developed countries (Gümüş, Arar, & Oplatka, 2021), like the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, and Australia, which have promulgated a series of policies to support educational leaders in preparing for the specialist roles (Bush, 2020). For instance, Gümüş, et al. (2021) reviewed school leadership for social equality, and identified an obvious imbalance of research depth and breadth between Western and Non-western nations. Several existing reviews emphasized the research gap regarding EDLM knowledge production in developing countries like Latin America (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018) or Asia (Adams et al., 2023). Law (2012)' s research demonstrated that Chinese educational leaders generally indicated a coexistence with Anglo-American leadership and management values, but this needs to be further explored.

The EDLM paradigms in other nations may not be suited to the Chinese context due to significant differences in cultural, social, and educational backgrounds. Applying existing research uncritically to understand Chinese EDLM may obscure unique characteristics, such

as China's collectivist ethos and hierarchical governance, leading to misaligned interpretations of educational leadership practices (Xue & Bush, 2024). Professional growth is crucial for aspiring educational leaders or principals in China. There is a common belief that high-level leadership have a significant impact on individual and organizational performance (Liu & Hallinger, 2018). A systematic review of EDLM in China can provide theoretical guidance and practical reference for the professional development of educational leaders or administrators, which identifies local models rooted in cultural traditions and regional differences instead of simply applying existing theories (Zhu & Caliskan, 2021).

Researchers have made some efforts in EDLM reviews in China from various aspects. For example, Walker and his co-authors (Walker, Hu, & Qian, 2012; Walker & Qian, 2015) carried out reviews on the subject in China that functioned as a knowledge foundation of review, but were limited to principal leadership before 2013. Liu, Wang, & Liang (2019) summarized president leadership studies in their work that only focused on the Chinese higher education setting. A more recent review was conducted by Yang (2021), which compared Chinese and American educational leadership styles but ignored management models. However, neither a systematic review to show which of these EDLM styles have significant concentration across China, nor to present the priority and relevance of studies through the distribution of knowledge production has yet to be found. A review study that comprehensively discusses international publications of EDLM in China is therefore needed to provide conceptual and methodological insights for the future.

Methodology

This study applied a topographical review that demonstrated patterns of knowledge production regarding publication, research methods, conceptual model, and characteristics of Chinese EDLM practices, which is similar to other systematic reviews in this field (e.g. Adams et al., 2023; Hallinger, 2017). The topographical review is a type of systematic review approach that collects related evidence that fits specified criteria to answer research questions through systematic searching and filtering of articles in the context of geography or a particular area (Castillo & Chen, 2015; Hallinger & Hammad, 2019). This approach was used because it could identify potentially valuable studies to explore patterns of knowledge production regarding the applied theoretical models and research topics of EDLM in China. We identified the sources using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page, et al., 2021), consisting of steps of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion, as shown in the flowchart (Figure 1).
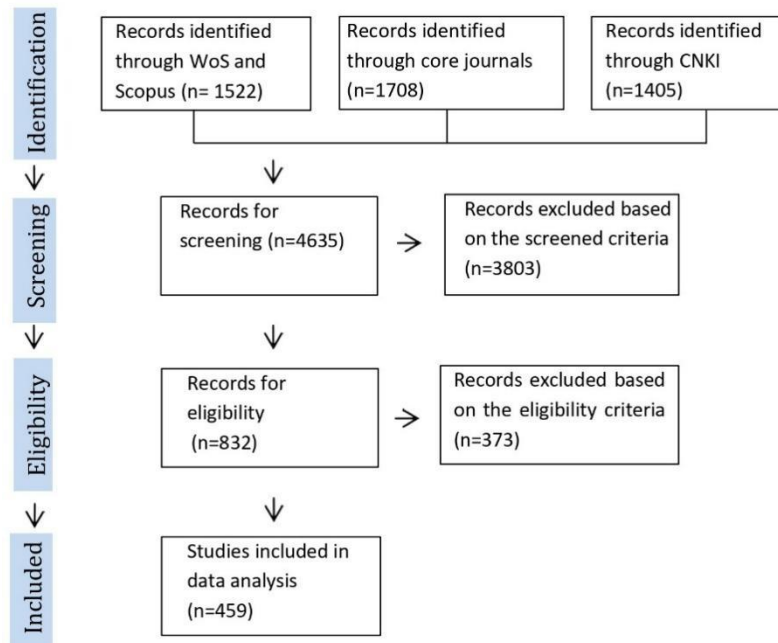
Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart of sources selection steps

In the identification step, the first searching action for articles was conducted using WoS and Scopus, since these two popular databases provide a rich coverage of publications. The search parameters consist of three rows: (leadership OR management OR administration) and (school* OR "higher education" OR university* OR president* OR principal*) for title and (Chinese OR China) for the topic, abstract, and keyword. Together, this process yielded 773 journal articles in WoS and 749 in Scopus, showing 1522 articles in two databases. The searching action for Chinese articles was conducted in CNKI, which is a widely acknowledged high-quality database in China. The keywords used in CNKI were: (jiaoyu lingdaoli OR xiaozhang lingdaoli OR jiaoyu guanli). Together, this process yielded 2493 English and 1332 Chinese articles in three databases.

In the second search action, we identified studies in core EDLM journals defined by previous research (Hallinger, 2017; Hallinger and Bryant 2013) in order to avoid missing articles outside the above databases. All of these well-known journals publish in English, employ a double-blind review procedure, and are crucially focused on EDLM. Nine international journals were searched on their homepages with the term "China OR Chinese", namely Educational Administration Quarterly (n=83), Educational Management Administration & Leadership (n=294), International Journal of Leadership in Education (n=188), International Journal of Educational Management (n=469), Journal of Educational Administration (n=267), Journal of School Leadership (n=66), Leadership and Policy in Schools (n=83), School Effectiveness and School Improvement (n=108), and School Leadership and Management (n=150). There were a group of articles (n=1708) in these journals were identified.

In the screening phase, duplicate articles that appear in databases and the core journal set were reduced (n=1178). Then, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were proposed to refine relevant studies: 1) including research published between 2000 and 2024; and excluding research in other time periods; 2) including articles in the field of social science; and excluding articles in nature science (e.g. building and environment; information system and information management; therapeutics and clinical); 3) including journal articles; excluding book chapters, conference proceedings, simple opinions pieces, and theses and dissertations; 4) including Chinese articles in Peking University Core Journals Index, excluding articles outside this index.

This study focused on articles published after the 2000s, since the 21st century witnessed an obvious expansion of research and increasing regional or national reviews in educational management and

leadership (Hallinger & Kovačević, 2019). The reason for reviewing articles in English language journals is that they are broadly recognized international journals that embody an abundant knowledge base in EDLM. English is widely accepted as the primary global language for scientific publication; thus, this paper can contribute to EDLM scholars to find the appropriate way to share research results. The researchers also reviewed relevant studies in Chinese language since.

On this basis, we excluded the dataset to the size of 3803 publications. Further, we ensured the remaining 832 articles' eligibility by carefully reading titles, abstracts, and some contents when we could not judge from the abstract. 195 articles were deleted for unsuitable topical focus, such as those that only addressed teachers' challenges and growth but were rare from a management perspective and those mainly discussed regional educational policies. Articles regarding school leadership and management, university governance and administration, organizational behavior and support, and educational supervision were included. 373 articles were excluded because of their lack of fit with this geographic scope, not being conducted in mainland China, or sampling collected from schools located not in Mainland China. In the end, 459 works remained for data analysis.

Data analysis of this review was conducted through quantitative and qualitative approaches. This research primarily applied bibliometrics to describe the diverse patterns of knowledge generation of Chinese EMDL. The selected articles were inputted into a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel with columns including author names, article title, journal title, key words, research approach, and organization type. Then, data were coded for further analysis. For example, each research approach was assigned a different code (qualitative 1, quantitative 2,

mixed methods 3, review 4). We applied descriptive statistics with tables and figures that highlighted the variability across publication volume, authorship, journal distribution, range of topics, and research methods. Next, content analysis was employed to interpret features of EMDL practices in China. Finally, the evolution of knowledge in China was compared that included in EMDL reviews in other regions.

Results

Features of Publications

Publication Volume. The results of publications indicated that research on educational leadership and management has increased dramatically over the past two decades (Figure 2). In total, 231 English articles and 228 Chinese articles were involved in the database, showing the similar degree of focus and speed of development of EDML research. Indeed, it was found that 41.2% (n=189) of the total studies in the review were published in the past three years (2022-2024), followed by the period between 2019 and 2021 with 21.6% (n=99), 15.5% from 2016 to 2018 (n=71). This indicates an active research trend since a growing number of research interests have significantly moved this field forward in recent years.
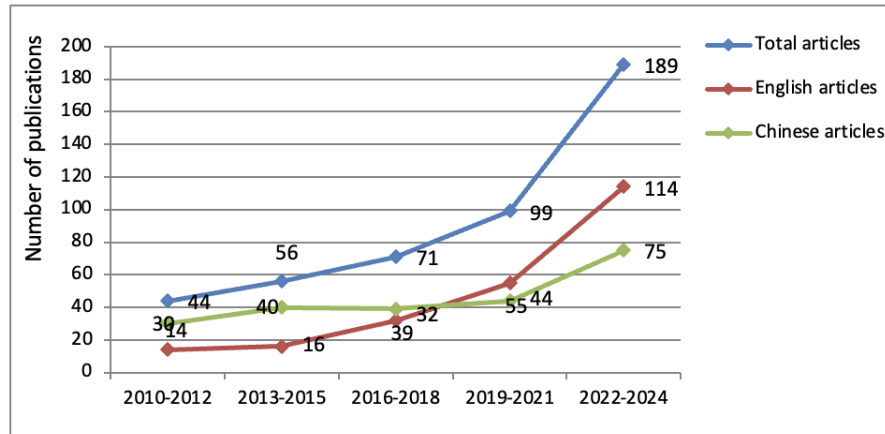
Figure 2. Journal publication volume

Authorship. Of the scholars who had authored or co-authored at least 6 articles concerning Chinese EDLM, five of them were found in English publications and five in Chinese publications (Figure 3). Allan Walker (n=16) and Xinping Zhang (n=14) contributed to the most articles in two languages, respectively, which followed by Haiyan Qian, Philip Hallinger, Zhenxiang Sun, Peng Liu, Shengnan Liu, Decheng Zhao, Yulian Zeng, Chen Junjun and Shuang Zhang. Studies of these top researchers have been widely cited by scholars interested in this field. For example, Qian and Walker (2013)'s study on the path of principal leadership and its impact on teacher development under Chinese educational reform was cited by the following relevant studies (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Zheng et al., 2016). It is notable that not all the productive researchers listed are affiliated with Chinese institutions.
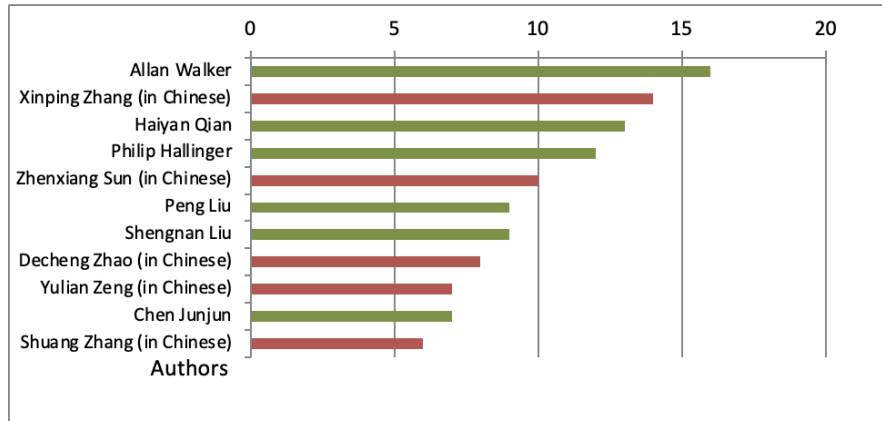
Figure 3. Distribution of key authors

Next, we used a series of coding to classify the authors' backgrounds in each study: (1) MC means all authors are from China; (2) IA refers to all international authors; (3) CI involves Chinese authors who affiliated with international institutions for the research; and (4) CA refers to articles co-authored by international and Chinese researchers. The results indicated that only 9 out of 228 Chinese articles are from the CA group, and the rest belong to the MC group. The authorship types of English articles are diverse: 20.4% of articles are MC, 8.2% are IA, 29.1% are CI, and 42.3% belong to CA, showing that partnership between Chinese and international scholars represented the largest portion of research in English literature.

Journal Distribution. As shown in Figure 4, there are eight international journals that have published at least seven articles regarding EDLM in China. EMAL published the highest number of studies (n=42), followed by IJLE (n=17), SUS (n=15), IJED (n=13), JEA (n=12), FIP (n=9), IJEM (n=7), APER (n=7), and FEC (n=7), dispersing in both international EDLM journals and general education journals. Other journals like EAQ (n=4) and LPS (n=0) have lower publishing

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rates, which were also identified as rare sources for research from African, Latin America (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018) and Arab societies (Hallinger & Hammad, 2019). These articles were distributed across 42 journals. There are 5 journals in Chinese publications that have published at least seven articles. *Middle School Management* published the highest number of relevant studies in Chinese languages. Learners and researchers may find interest in the distribution of articles for their future learning and publication. In addition, there were more international "core" journals that belong to the EDLM catalog, which revealed a potential "blind spot" in Chinese EDLM journal development to some extent. The results showed that international journals seemed to provide more chances for researchers in this field than Chinese journals. The article distribution across different journals shows a limited number of Chinese publications in well-known international EDLM journals.
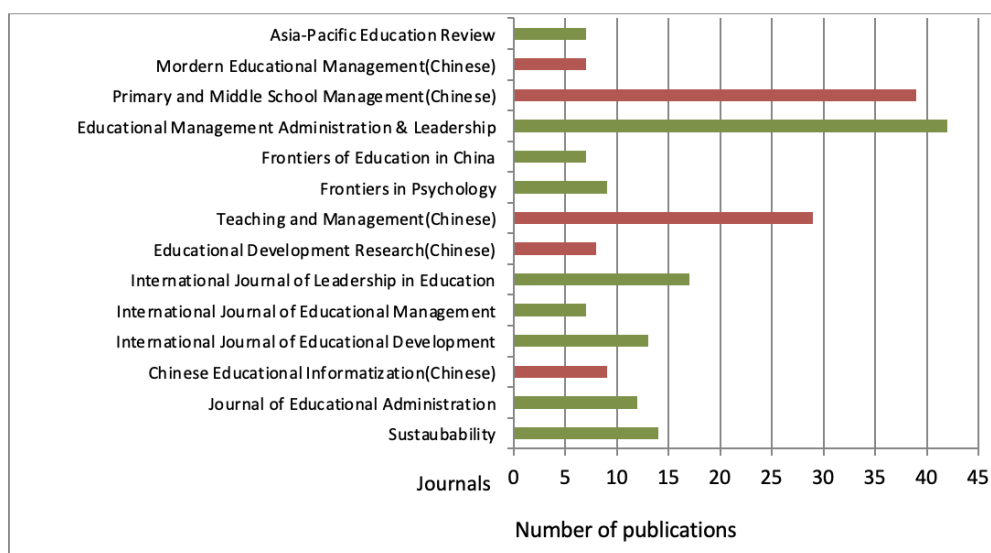
Figure 4. Distribution of key journals

In terms of the journal type (Figure 5), reviewed articles mainly belong to leadership and management (n=101, 51.5%), followed by general education (n=34, 17.3%), Asia-pacific studies (n=16, 8.2%), Chinese studies (n=11, 5.6%), general management (n=8, 4.1%), and educational technology (n=5, 2.6%), with the rest (n=21, 10.7%) belonging to other social sciences. Chinese language publications were university journals (24.4%), and those focused on general education (31.4%), educational technology (15.7%), vocational and higher education (8.4%), other social sciences (8.4%), teacher education (5.8%), and educational management (5.8%). Apart from general education, the second most common type for Chinese publications is the university journal. Chinese language educational technology journals are much more likely to include related articles than are those in the English language.
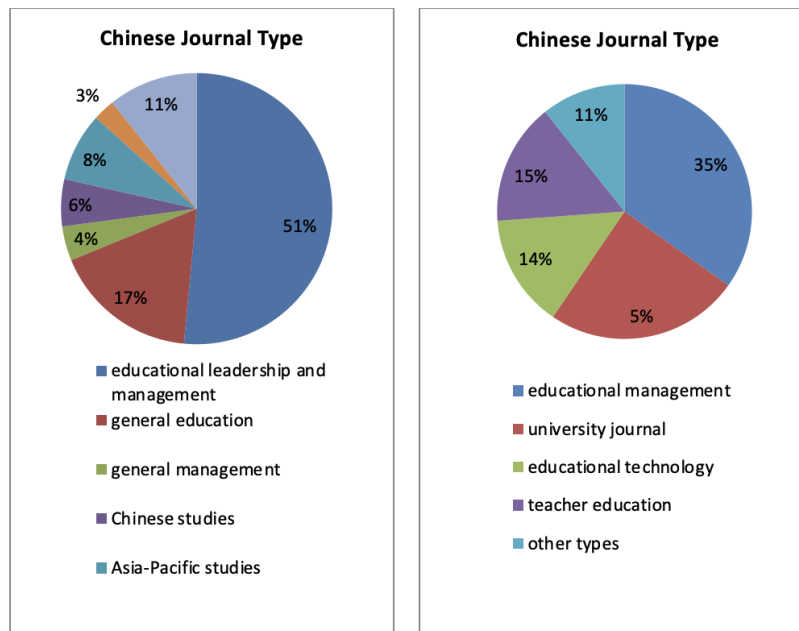
Figure 5. Distribution of journal type

Nature of Research

Research Approach. In terms of research methods, 17 articles applied a conceptual or commentary method, 13 articles were comparative research, 22 articles were review, and the other 407 articles were empirical studies. There was a preference for exploring leadership and management in the school context (60.7%) over the college or university context (37.3%), which is in line with review results found in some developing societies (Adams et al., 2023; Gümüş et al., 2020). In addition, 6 studies were conducted from an inclusive perspective (both school and higher education) and 3 studies were finished without a certain level of context. Although all categories of papers contribute to an increasing and well-established knowledge base, their distribution offers insight into the research focuses and priorities within a particular society.

Among the empirical studies, over 58.7% applied the quantitative method, 28.0% used a qualitative approach, and 13.3% used the mixed method of research. An imbalanced proportion toward the knowledge base EDLM is indicated by the prevalence of quantitative over qualitative approaches among researchers in China. It may ignore narratives and institutional ambiguities that qualitative approaches capture, hindering the development of comprehensive theories of Chinese EDLM. Based on a four-level statistical classification in existing reviews (Hallinger & Chen, 2015; Castillo & Hallinger, 2018), we coded the statistical type of quantitative and mixed-method studies in this research. Level 1 descriptive statistics accounted for 22.2%, Level 2 single causal factor was responsible for 30.9%, Level 3 correlation analysis with multivariate controls made up the proportion of 18.5%, and Level 4 multiple-factor modeling in complex constructs accounted for 28.4%. The findings indicated a low percentage of use of

complex statistical approaches. The distribution of knowledge production method is characteristic of literature that shows an early development phase.

Research Regions. Although it was difficult to identify these studies' regional distribution across Chinese mainland due to the huge quantity of Chinese provinces and cities, we found two features when comparing Chinese research with literature in this field from other countries. First, it is worthwhile noting that scholars paid special attention to leadership development in the remote countryside or rural western regions in China (n=43). Second, some scholars conducted leadership and management research (n=16) in megalopolises like Shanghai or Beijing (de jure population over 20 million). Educational resources and development opportunities for leaders vary from region to region, which calls for further explorations on the similarities and differences in leadership characteristics to achieve the aim of equity in education proposed by the Ministry of Education in China.

Research Topics. We cataloged the included literature by eight research topics (Table 1), and found some works belonging to more than one topic. For instance, Ma and Marion (2021)'s and Zheng, Yin, & Li (2019)'s studies on the connection between principal leadership and teacher self-efficacy were assigned to the groups of *instructional leadership* and *effects on teachers*. Some topics discussed in only one article, such as contingent reward leadership, transnational leadership, system leadership, dual leadership, inclusive leadership, team temporal leadership, spiritual leadership, student leadership, sustainable leadership, mixed governance, emergency management, teacher' aggressive management, reputation management, and university-school partnership, were not included in the list. The results

of research topic indicated that scholars have rich exploration interests in Chinese EDLM.

Table 1.

Research topic of selected studies

Topics	Sub-Topics	No. of English articles	No. of Chinese articles	Percentage
Leadership styles	Teacher leadership	20	27	10.2%
	Principle leadership	18	19	8.1%
	Instructional leadership	15	24	8.5%
	Transformational leadership	11	15	5.4%
	Distributed leadership	6	10	3.5%
	Technology leadership	5	6	2.4%
	Female leadership	5	6	2.4%
	Authentic leadership	3	8	1.5%
	Learning-centered leadership	3	7	2.4%
	Middle-level leadership	3	4	1.5%
	Curriculum leadership	3	5	1.7%
	Moral leadership	3	6	1.9%
	Paternalistic leadership	2	3	1.1%
	Servant leadership	2	4	1.3%
	Academic leadership	2	4	1.3%
Management types	Student management	6	3	1.9%
	Crisis management	4	3	1.5%
	Knowledge management	3	3	1.3%
	Financial management	2	4	1.3%
	Human resource management	2	6	1.7%
EDLM's effect	Effect on teacher	38	29	14.6%

	Effect on organization	13	27	8.7%
	Effect on student	10	15	5.4%
Interventions of EDLM	Influencing factors of EDLM (social-cultural, traditional cultural, organizational context, training, individual traits, initiative)	18	22	8.7%
Cross-region comparison	Leadership in rural or China's western region	10	18	6.1%
	Cross-country or cross-culture leadership	9	14	5.0%
Leadership development and strategies	Leadership development	19	26	9.8%
	Leadership strategies	7	27	7.4%
Leadership conceptualization	Leadership conceptualization and evaluation	5	20	5.4%
General EDLM's Aims	Organizational effectiveness and improvement	2	3	1.1%
	Curriculum reform	2	4	1.3%
	Educational change	2	3	1.1%

Note: The total percentage is not equal to 100% because several studies were classified to multiple groups and several seldom occur topics were not included.

As shown in the above table, the examination of EMDL's effects, including the influences on teachers (14.6%), organizations (8.7%), and students (5.4%), was the most significant research topic, while the interventions of EDLM accounts for less percentage (8.7%). More leadership styles than management types were discussed in the database. In terms of the subject of leadership, the focus on teacher leadership (10.2%) is more than principal leadership (8.1%), but less on middle-level leadership (1.5%) and paternalistic leadership (1.1%). Furthermore, instructional leadership (8.5%), transformational

leadership (5.4%), distributed leadership (3.5%), and technology leadership (2.4%) account for significant proportions. Researchers also examined leadership development (9.8%), leadership strategies (7.4%), leadership model and evaluation standards (5.4%), as well as rural-city (6.1%) and cross-culture (5.0%) leadership comparison. The findings concerning topical foci showed a scarcity of concentration for *general EDLM's aims.* There are only two articles in each sub-topic, namely *organizational effectiveness and improvement* (Hallinger & Liu, 2016; Wei, Ni, & Yoon, 2023), *curriculum reform* (Qian, & Walker, 2013; Walker et al., 2011), and *educational change* (Liu, 2020), but which were frequently explored topics in other regions or countries (e.g. Adams et al. 2023; Hallinger & Hammad, 2019).

Characteristics of Chinese Leadership and Management

Through the research content analysis, we summarized characteristics of EDLM practices in China into three foci: contextual roles, leaders' roles, and interaction between leaders and other stakeholders. Research regarding the cross-society comparison, the influence of culture, institutional climate, and EDLM's impact on the organization were classified into contextual understanding. Articles referring to leadership styles and management models comprised the group on the topic of the leader's role. Research about the effects of leadership and management on teachers and students were categorized into the topic of interaction.

Contextual Roles. Scholars have continually worked to enhance contextual understandings of leadership and management, referring to cross-nation (Huang, 2018; Chen & Bos, 2023), cross-cultural (Dinh et al., 2021; Wang & Chen, 2021), political (Yang, 2020), transformational (Szeto, Cheng, & Sin, 2019), and traditional Chinese (Onsman, 2012), organizational (Zhu & Engels, 2014) contexts. A

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common assumption among these studies is that educational organizations usually run under sets of cultural values and contextual influences, which affect the daily work of management teams or individual leaders. Also, the review dataset contains studies that focus on the impact of leadership and management on organizational commitment (Huang et al., 2021), organizational trust (Zhang, Bowers, & Pang, 2023), and organizational identification (Li et al., 2023). Thus, we viewed the relationship between leadership and organizational context as interactive and two-way.

Notably, political culture is viewed to weightily shape leaders' behaviors and practices, since principals should transfer education reform proposed by the central government into school reality (Yang, 2020). China's general top-down accountability context required educational leaders to strengthen internal construction within organizations and respond to external demands, which was markedly different from the bottom-up style in Japan (Huang, 2018) or collaborative management strategy in French culture (He & Liu, 2018). Although there is a relatively nationally centralized educational administrative system compared to Western countries, scholars argued that increasing region- and school-based management requirements and power shows the new trends in education reform (Qian & Walker, 2011; 2013). Moreover, existing research reemphasized influences of socialist ideology in aspects like the generalization of ideological and political training for educational leaders and teachers, and construction of party-government model universities (Shen, Huang, & Fan, 2020).

Another significant impact caused by contextual change is constantly developing technology and innovation, which has integrated into different types of educational organizations that shape technology-

related responsibilities for leaders. Following national educational informatization policies, Chinese schools and universities have implemented reforms that have rebuilt the roles of leaders and educators. Accordingly, there was an emerging academic focus on technology leadership or leadership for ICT integration into education (Wu et al., 2019; Yuting et al., 2022). The findings suggest paying more attention to the transformation from traditional to technology-integrated educational contexts for scholars and educators.

Leader's Role. In line with global literature, the review found that Chinese educational leaders played various roles in creating an effective learning and teaching environment, performing rich management and leadership models in China. As shown in Table 2, we compared the existing evidence in China with the classification framework proposed by Bush and Glover (2014). Although we identified that most types of management and leadership occurred in the Chinese context, additional leadership styles were found, such as servant leadership (Latif, et al., 2021), e-leadership (Wu et al., 2019), or sustainable leadership (Iqbal & Piwowar-Sulej, 2021), and additional management models like crisis management (Lawrence & Wu, 2020). Further explorations are needed to discern whether these new statements have emerged from existing types or as new models, which distinguish educational leaders in China from other regions. It also cannot be inferred that the types of EDLM that are not being studied in China do not exist in Chinese educational practices, as the reason may be a lack of research during the given review period.

Table 2.

Typology of management and leadership

Management model	Chinese EDLM	Leadership model	Chinese EDLM
Formal	√	Managerial	√
Collegial	√	Participative	
		Distributed	√
		Teacher	√
Political	√	Transactional	√
		Transformational	√
Subjective		Postmodern	
		Emotional	
Ambiguity	√	Contingent	√
Cultural	√	Moral	√

Interaction between Leaders and Followers. Scholars also highlighted the relationship between leaders and other stakeholders, including teaching staff, administrative staff, and students, as found in many studies in different societies. Evidence in China has discussed the direct relationship between educational leadership and teachers' efficacy (Ma & Marion, 2021), professional learning (Liu & Hallinger, 2018; Zheng, Yin, & Li, 2021), knowledge sharing (Zhang et al., 2023), teacher ICT competency (Yuting et al., 2022), and job satisfaction (Dou et al., 2017). Although several studies noted the effect of leadership and management on student performance and learning outcomes (Lee, et al., 2012; Li, Zhu, & Li, 2022), the research on the interaction between leaders and students is significantly less. The reason for this may be that the effect of leadership on students is indirect in line with the previous argument (Leithwood et al., 2004).

These identified relationships proved that most Chinese educational and leadership practices were in accordance with the generally accepted theoretical frameworks (Bush & Glover, 2014; Bush 2020), such that, leadership functions as an influencing process promoting

achievements of shared vision and educational goals through interactions with various stakeholders. In accordance with previous reviews (Walker & Qian, 2015; Yang, 2021), a remarkable feature is that Chinese educational leaders presented significant sensitivity to organizational structure settings and human resource networks, particularly connections to different department heads and influential team members. These sensitivities reflected the concept that building up broader relationships with followers and other leaders was necessary for top leaders to coordinate internal and external resources for their organizations and themselves (He & Liu, 2018; Yang, 2020).

Discussion

This systematic review provided a new insight into the EDLM knowledge base by drawing an in-depth picture of research in China. Compared to the previous reviews on Chinese school leadership (Walker et al., 2012; Walker & Qian, 2015), this work extends the review range by including articles on higher education and the past decade to present a comprehensive and more recent knowledge production. The results generally showed that EDLM research in China is in line with the Asian trend (Hallinger & Chen, 2015), and expands faster than in Latin America (Castillo & Hallinger, 2018) and Africa (Hallinger, 2017), showing that scholars have been struggling to catch up with EDLM research in developed countries, especially in recent years.

Regarding question 1, we identified an active research trend with a significantly growing number of research publications that moved to this field in the past three years. The findings point out the direction for scholars to locate the needed literature and share the research outcomes. Reasons for the fast academic development in China might

be the increasing requirements on educational organizations and leaders set by the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMOE), international academic exchange or study abroad opportunities, and the growing pressure of publishing tasks in journals (Dinh et al., 2021; Liu & Huang, 2023). However, the article distribution across different journals shows a limited number of Chinese publications in well-known international EDLM journals.

The results of authorship indicate a trend in the past two decades that collaborative relationships between international and Chinese researchers have taken a critical role in research, and more scholars with mainland backgrounds have taken on research studies as first authors since 2017, such as Liu and Hallinger (2018) and Ma and Marion (2019). However, among these scholars who contributed to international publications as the first author, most were not affiliated with Chinese institutions. Thus, it is necessary to create more exchange opportunities and communication platforms for Chinese researchers. Besides this, the recent MC authorship research (Cheng & Zhu, 2021; Huang, Zhang, & Huang, 2020) showed independent research ability of local scholars has improved. Given the irreplaceable position of the English language in academics, Chinese scholars with bilingual competency are necessary, since they are able to access both international and local knowledge and collaborate with scholars worldwide. This research suggests creating collaborative networks of local and international scholars is a way to connect Chinese EDLM further to the global knowledge base.

To answer question 2, the distribution of research type indicates the need for further conceptual articles to theorize how leadership and management are shaped by Chinese educational contexts. Although a concept of educational leadership and management consistent with

internationally recognized models (e.g. Gümüş et al., 2021; Hallinger & Chen, 2015) that are widely accepted in China, the uniqueness of each educational system decides various practices and challenges in different countries. Thus, the misalignment caused by different social and educational cultures must be noted when studying the influence of Western EDLM theories. For instance, some scholars considered Chinese localized characteristics into these concepts in their research, such as Confucianism (e.g. Onsman, 2012) and dual leadership under the Communist Party of China (Xu & Law, 2015). Studies on how scholars contribute to theories from local perspectives and how to connect to international literature are recommended in the future. Also, the results indicated that scholars preferred to employ existing Western models in their empirical quantitative studies. The prevalence of quantitative studies has implications for rich types of future research, since diverse research methods can contribute to the development of comprehensive theories and deeper understanding of the complex influencing factors of EDLM in China.

Moreover, more recent studies specified the geographic research context of urban or rural regions (Liu, 2024; Liu, S., & Hallinger, 2018), revealing the across-region differences in leadership practices and strategies in China. Regional disparities in research focus reflects the uneven distribution of educational resources. Given the economic and geographical reasons, the unequal educational resource distribution is unavoidable at the present stage, which leads to different EDML challenges and strategies for leaders between big cities and small towns that demand further explorations on the similarities and differences to develop leadership and management. Therefore, researchers need to explore more deeper and offer suggestions to alleviate the structural contradictions in EDLM policy implementation.

Besides, there were significantly more academic focuses on the school context than the university setting concerning this topic, which indicates the potential research gap in EDLM research for effective management of higher education in China. Studies on the school mainly discussed principals' leadership, while articles in the university involve more roles like presidents, faculty leaders, academic managers, middle-level administrators, and more management responsibilities referring to not only leadership but also various administrative tasks, like institutional governance and administration (Huang, et al., 2018) and academic and reputation management (Chen & Zhu, 2021; Dinh et al., 2021).

Question 3 addressed the EDLM practices, including human-context interaction, leaders' roles, and leader-follower relations, which indicates the actual situation in China. It found that Chinese educational leaders' roles mainly align with the highly recognized models (Bush & Glover, 2014) and other nation-based reviews in EDLM (Adams et al., 2023; Hallinger & Hammad, 2019). In line with Huang et al. (2021) and Qian and Walker (2019)'s arguments, the choice of effective management and leadership styles in China is context-dependent and should consider the size and structure of the institution, the available internal resources, and the external environment. Thus, the essential requirement for developing effective leadership strategies is to follow national educational policies and integrate such strategies into the environment at large. For example, CMOE released the *Construction Guidance for Ideological and Political Training for Higher Education in 2020,* which launched a high-quality evaluation system and incentive mechanism, increasing demands on political and transactional capability.

In addition, leadership practices are closely linked to the changing external environment. The evolving educational environment, such as Chinse curriculum reform (Qian, & Walker, 2013) and the advancement of educational technology (Yuting et al., 2022) requires corresponding leadership developments and timely research support to follow changes. For instance, the public emergency of the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed global education into a field that relies more on mobile technology and networking, particularly increasing crisis management and technology leadership demands. The trend of wide usage of educational technology could extend the traditional range of educational leaders (Bush, 2020) by involving technology leaders, like the heads of the ICT center in the Chinese context. Notably, this article provides a deeper contextual comprehension of how Chinese educational leaders practice leadership and management to navigate organizations in the current ever-changing environment. It is observed that the key features of educational leadership and management practices in China are shaped by the organizational context, individual ability, and interactions within the educational system.

Despite our best efforts to make a complete review, the limitations concerning the collection of articles in the specified databases stand out. Although we selected three authoritative databases and "core" international journals, other relevant works may have been excluded, and it would be rushed to claim that this review represents a full perception of EDLM literature in China. Additionally, in this study, we only focused on leadership and management in the education field. More studies should be conducted in other research contexts that can extend insights to leaders of enterprises or public authorities. To do so, we should consider broadening the scope of databases and research

types, as well as adding rich research content that may support scholars and readers in framing future studies.

Conclusion

This study filled the gap of a limited systematic review by including more types of organizations and more recent Chinese EDLM studies and adding significant Chinese content to the international knowledge base. There has been an obviously increasing publication trend in research interests, particularly in the past three years. Despite the changes in research hotspots compared to previous studies and the slight differences between Chinese EDLM features and those of other counties, the common goal of enhancing educational leadership and management remains the same. The choice of research topics changed along with the advancement of EDLM knowledge and the evolvement of the societal and political environment. A significant change is that research interests in the first decade in this review were mainly on the construction of conceptual and theoretical understanding, standards exploration, and educational policy interpretation, while studies attempted to investigate specific issues and relationships through collecting empirical data in the next decade. This study offers a reasonable representation of literature in China, which serves as a reliable foundation for determining future directions of leaders' ability development and EDLM research.

The present review contributes to an overview of research that is the first step to promoting effective leadership and management in China. Scholars are concerned with various challenges faced by Chinese education leaders; thus, we underline the need for leadership and management development. An ongoing exploration of the responsibilities and practices of educational leaders in China could be

a critical path to catching up with effective organization management in other developed countries. The training program should be provided not only for a single top leader, but also for senior or middle management teams like heads of teaching and research groups, as the evidence supported (Tang, 2022; Zhang, Wong, & Wang, 2022). Besides, future studies in theory-driven and in-depth exploratory approaches are suggested for real problems in the EDLM context in China. It is hoped that scholars in China put more effort into improving and contributing to the development of the Chinese knowledge base by establishing cooperation with international scholars.

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The Effect of School Principals' Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Motivation

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Abstract	Article Info
Social entrepreneurship is defined as bringing innovative solutions to social problems. In the study conducted by Guzmán et al., (2024), it is emphasized that social entrepreneurship is a developing concept and that studies on social entrepreneurship should be supported by studies conducted in other sectors, especially in the service sector. It is known that the leadership skills of school administrators influence teacher motivation. However, there are no studies in the literature that reveal how effective the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators are on teachers' motivation. This research was planned to fill this gap in the literature and based on the necessity to determine the effect of the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators on teacher motivation. The universe of this research, designed according to the relational model, one of the quantitative research methods, consists of teachers working in schools located in a region of country X in the 2023-2024 academic year. According to official statistics, a total of 1859 teachers work in this region, and the sample of the research consists of 339 teachers determined by the simple random sampling method. In the study, "Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Scale" and "Teacher Motivation Scale" were used as data collection tools. In the study, the perceived social entrepreneurial leadership and motivation levels of teachers working in the relevant schools were determined according to the variables of the unit, gender, marital status, age,

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seniority, branch and status of the participants and the relationships between the variables were revealed. The most important findings of the study are that there is a high level of positive relationship between the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators and teacher motivation, and that the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators predict teacher motivation at a high level, positively and significantly. Various suggestions have been made to researchers and policy makers in line with these findings.

Introduction

Society is faced with social problems that require new approaches to problem solving. When we consider that the needs of society are now far beyond the capacities of governments, all sectors need to cooperate to combat social problems and improve living conditions. This necessity for cooperation evokes the concept of social entrepreneurship, which is defined as bringing innovative solutions to social problems. In the study conducted by Guzmán et al., (2024), it is emphasized that social entrepreneurship is a developing concept and that studies on social entrepreneurship should be supported by studies conducted in other sectors, especially in the service sector. In this context, how the social entrepreneurship approach, which is effective in producing innovative solutions to social problems, intersects with leadership styles, especially in the field of education, and the effect of

this intersection on important outcomes such as teacher motivation should be carefully examined.

Leadership style is the style and approach used to direct people, implement plans and motivate them. The management style and leadership skills of school principals are critical in motivating teachers (Buluç, 2009). Various studies have shown that the leadership qualities of administrators are an important component that contributes to teacher motivation, retention and job satisfaction (Elzahiri, 2010; Finnigan; 2010; Ingersoll, 2001; Lekamge, 2010; Thoonen et al., 2012). How school principals use their leadership affects the organization, culture and working conditions of the school, which in turn affects teacher motivation (Finnigan, 2010; Ghamrawi & Jammal, 2013). Because school administrators are responsible for facilitating and developing collaboration, creating learning opportunities, and helping teachers strengthen their sense of competence in their profession (Korkmaz, 2007; Lekamge, 2010; Lynch, 2012).

Social entrepreneurial leadership is defined as the process of creating social value by bringing innovative solutions to social problems (Öz & Baloğlu, 2023). This form of leadership emerges as a dynamic process that requires interaction with a group of people in line with specific goals or tasks. The fact that teachers in educational institutions work in a structure that requires intense interaction necessitates that social entrepreneurial leadership be considered an important concept in this field. Therefore, in this study, the dimension of social entrepreneurial leadership in producing innovative solutions to social problems and creating social value in educational environments will be highlighted. Within the scope of the research, teacher motivation, as defined by Robbins and Judge (2018), will be considered as an internal or external force that directs, mobilizes, and sustains individuals' behaviors over

time and under changing conditions and cannot be directly observed. The findings of studies that emphasize the decisive role of leadership in the social entrepreneurship process (Kimakwa et al., 2023) constitute one of the fundamental bases of this study.

The connection between entrepreneurship and school leadership is increasingly recognized as important for effective school improvement. Entrepreneurship involves creative and innovative value creation, while school leadership focuses on influencing teachers and stakeholders to create an effective learning environment that benefits students, teachers, parents, and society (Frentz et al., 2025). School leaders need to rethink existing resources and seize new opportunities for themselves and their communities, and this has implications for the knowledge and skills expected of principals and others in schools. They draw on the concepts of 'social capital' and 'social entrepreneurship' to identify the tensions and possibilities school leaders experience when seeking resources for school-community change (Anderson & White, 2011). Given the increasing centralization and competitive pressures that schools face, the role of school principals as entrepreneurs is receiving increasing attention in academic and practical contexts (Yemini et al., 2015).

In recent years, studies in the field of educational sciences have focused on teacher motivation due to efforts to improve school climate (Thapa et al., 2013). Although scientific interest in the subject has intensified, it is emphasized that in addition to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of teachers (Mahler et al., 2018), there may be other school factors that can affect teacher motivation, and more research is recommended (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). Similarly, more research is called for on teacher motivation in order to determine the strongest factors that will increase both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, such

as school environment and student behavior (Fernet et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2015). Studies aimed at determining the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school leaders are considered important, especially considering that the clear role of leadership in the social value creation process should be determined (ElNaggar & Hammad, 2024).

Teacher motivation is of vital importance for the education system. The leadership of the school principal positively affects the motivation of teachers both directly and indirectly (Köse et al., 2024). Ensuring teacher motivation is essential to promote a healthy and effective educational environment (Rey et al., 2024). There is an important relationship between social entrepreneurial leadership and the concept of motivation. When this relationship is examined, it can be considered as providing positive change, increasing people's sensitivity to the environment, the desire to create social value, helping society, and the determination to develop innovative solutions to a social problem (Türkeş & Özgeldi, 2023). Social entrepreneurial leadership consists of the dimensions of social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability (Öz, 2022). It is possible to come across studies in the literature that reveal the relationship between these dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership and teacher motivation (Chang & Sung, 2024; Kaçar & Şahin, 2023; Kowalski & Johnson, 2024; Mesri et al., 2024; Xiang et al., 2024). Well-motivated teachers are individuals who have clearly defined goals and take action to achieve them. They have developed a strong sense of duty and responsibility (Rey et al., 2024). Leadership in education involves influencing teachers and stakeholders to create effective learning environments that benefit students, teachers, parents, and society (Daniëls et al., 2019). This approach aligns with entrepreneurial thinking and acting in school

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leadership, which emphasizes coordinating tasks, allocating resources, and encouraging innovative structures (Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz & Pashiardis, 2020).

Motivated teachers tend to create a more dynamic, inspiring, and effective learning environment (Day & Gu, 2009; Klassen & Durksen, 2018). When assessing their students, this can lead to a more holistic assessment process that focuses on student development and promotes meaningful learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). This contributes to an educational environment that values the growth and progress of each student. Furthermore, understanding teacher motivation in classroom management not only improves the learning experience of students, but also contributes to the formation of more engaged and motivated citizens (Caprara et al., 2020; Marzano et al., 2003). Motivated teachers create a dynamic and stimulating classroom environment that supports the holistic development of students and tend to choose more inclusive teaching styles, encourage active learning, recognize the specific strengths and weaknesses of each student, use positive and constructive approaches to discipline management, and foster an environment of mutual respect (Leithwood & Sun, 2019; Malinen & Savolainen, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Therefore, conducting a study to determine the effect of school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics on teachers' motivation will contribute to the field. In addition, this study will contribute to the guidance of policy makers by revealing the contribution of school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics on teachers' motivation.

The main purpose of this research is to determine the effects of school principals' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics on teachers' motivation. In this context, answers to the following

questions will be sought in order to achieve the purpose of the research.

1. According to teachers' perceptions, what are the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators and the level of motivation of teachers?

2. What is the relationship between the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school principals and the motivation of teachers?

3. To what extent do the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators predict the motivation of teachers?

Literature Review

Social Entrepreneurial Leadership

Although social entrepreneurship emerged as a sub-branch of entrepreneurship in the 1970s, it was tried to be explained with the concept of "social innovation" put forward by Peter Drucker in the early 1980s (Ron Rohas et al., 2024). Although there are many definitions in the literature on social entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship essentially consists of a multi-dimensional structure with a social mission (Sullivan Mort et al., 2003; Akter et al., 2020).

According to Mair and Martí (2006), social entrepreneurship is defined as the process of creating social value by discovering and taking advantage of opportunities through efforts to promote social change or meet social needs, while according to Dacin et al. (2010), it is defined as initiatives focused on the mission of creating social value, whether the results are positive or negative, and according to Bornstein and

Davis (2010), it is defined as the process of organizing problem-solving efforts. It is thought that the concept of social entrepreneurship (Núñez, 2020; Renko et al., 2015), which is defined as creating a social value by using the success strategies of economic markets, will contribute to the solution of these problems.

Social entrepreneurship functions to highlight unresolved societal concerns on a global scale, promote human development worldwide, and increase life expectancy (Alarifi et al., 2019). According to Rey-Martí et al. (2016), social entrepreneurship is considered as a social task process that uses the pooling of resources and creative ideas to help society grow both socially and economically. The unique challenges of social entrepreneurs require specific leadership qualities to influence stakeholders and promote effective outcomes in social endeavors (Brunelli & Cavazotte, 2024). It is seen that social entrepreneurship practices are defined as helping students develop the knowledge and skills to produce sustainable solutions to social needs (Huster et al., 2014). This approach has introduced a new type of leadership in the literature.

Social entrepreneurial leadership is defined as the process of creating social value by bringing innovative solutions to social problems. Social entrepreneurial leadership emerges as a process that requires interaction between a group of people with specific goals or tasks. Prabhu (1999) describes the primary mission of social entrepreneurial leaders as being individuals who create and manage innovative, entrepreneurial organizations or ventures that are social change and development for their group, while Adeagbo (2008) defines the social entrepreneurial leader as a leader with vision and values who creates change while generating self-sufficient or self-sustainable income to pursue the social mission.

Social entrepreneurial leadership consists of the dimensions of social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability (Öz & Baloğlu, 2023). The social responsibility dimension of social entrepreneurial leadership includes acting with social responsibility awareness in solidarity and providing a social benefit by solving social problems. The innovation dimension includes taking risks, creative thinking skills, acting with foresight and acting outside the box. The influence dimension includes creating a sense of ownership, trust, satisfaction, dedication and increasing the motivation of followers by evaluating feedback, while the sustainability dimension includes managing change, finding sustainable solutions, being able to play the role of a change agent and being in a constant search until permanent solutions are found to social problems (Öz, 2022).

Teacher Motivation

Motivation represents similar beliefs and emotions that affect professional and personal behavior; it is the force that drives a person to do something, such as learning to work productively and reach their potential (Bandura, 1993). Motivation can be generally defined as "an internal state that arouses, directs, and sustains behavior" (Woolfolk, 2007). Motivation is defined by Guay et al (2010) as the underlying reasons for behavior, while according to Ingvarson (2009), it is based on employees' perceptions of how satisfied they are with the functioning of their organization.

Robbins and Judge (2018), teacher motivation is defined as an unobservable force that directs, activates, and sustains behaviors due to internal or external factors over time and in the face of changing conditions. Similarly, According Cuevas to et al. (2018), quality education and academic success depend on teacher performance, and teacher performance also results from teacher motivation.

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Framed by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral processes that support individual goals, teacher motivation is determined by multiple factors and results in goal-centered actions aimed at being aligned with the school's goals (Kanfer & Chen, 2016). Canrinus (2012) and Thoonen et al. (2012) found that when teachers internally accept the school's goals as their own, teacher commitment increases, which is an important element for teachers' motivation and commitment to the teaching profession. In this respect, the successful functioning of a school or school system depends on the determining and fundamental variable of teacher motivation (Mintrop & Ordenes, 2017; Viseu et al., 2016).

Understanding the factors that contribute to teachers' demotivation provides insight into the creation of motivating conditions. Such negative outcomes are linked to disruptive student behaviors, negative student attitudes, long work schedules, intense and high workload demands, and stressful relationships in the school environment (Han & Yin, 2016; Viseu et al., 2016). Meeting teachers' intrinsic and extrinsic motivational needs improves the quality of job performance, contributes to student achievement, and helps meet teachers' work-life balance needs (Barrett & Harris, 2015; Clandinin et al., 2015; Deci et al., 2017; Dee & Wyckoff, 2015; Fernet et al., 2016; Mahler et al., 2018). Conversely, both undermining experiences and demotivating events contribute to decreased quality of job performance and increased teacher attrition rates (Brereton, 2019; Han & Yin, 2016; Hassanzadeh & Jafari, 2019).

Studies examining the relationships between social entrepreneurship and transformational leadership (Kırılmaz, 2013), ethical and servant leadership (Bahçebaşı, 2020) reveal the multidimensional structure of social entrepreneurial leadership. In addition, studies examining the relationships between social value creation processes (Türker, 2020;

Katı & Toker, 2021) and social entrepreneurship and individual personality traits (Gül, 2019; Kızılöz et al., 2021) shed light on how social entrepreneurship is shaped in individual and structural dimensions. While Pisapia (2009) emphasizes that school administrators should be structured as entrepreneurial leaders; Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz and Pashiardis (2020) associate the key role that school administrators play in resource creation processes with social entrepreneurial leadership traits. In this context, it is considered an important element in terms of effective leadership practices that social entrepreneurial leaders have intrinsic motivation (Nicholls, 2006; Shaw & Carter, 2007) and the competence to fulfill their self-actualization and personal motivation obligations (Wronka-Pośpiech, 2016). In this sense, social entrepreneurial leadership is considered as a way of creating social value in educational institutions (Öz, 2022).

Methodology

Research design and case selection

This study, which was conducted to determine the effect of school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics on teachers' motivation, was designed in accordance with a relational study model from quantitative research methods. The relational model is to reveal the relationship or effect between two different variables (Fraenkel et al., 2012). The main purpose of such studies is to examine whether the variables change together or, if there is a change, in what way (Karasar, 2017).

The universe of this research consists of teachers working in schools located in the central district of Y province in the 2023-2024 academic year. According to the data obtained from the official website of the Y Provincial Directorate of National Education on 26.03.2024, a total of

1859 teachers work in schools located in the central district. The sample of the research consists of 339 teachers determined by the simple random sampling method. Descriptive information about the sample research is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive Information of Participants

Variables	Category	f	%
Gender	Woman	162	47.8
	Man	177	52.2
Marital Status	Single	75	22.1
	Married	264	77.9
Age	25 years old and under	12	3.5
	Between 26-35 years old	108	31.9
	Between 36-45 years old	135	39.8
	Between 46-55 years old	60	17.7
	Ages 56 and over	24	7.1
Seniority	5 years and under	54	15.9
	Between 6-10 years	63	18.6
	Between 11-15 years	48	14.2
	Between 16-20 years	75	22.1
	Between 21-25 years	54	15.9
	26 years and above	45	13.3
Branch	Preschool Teacher	66	19.5
	Class Teacher	165	48.7
	Branch Teacher	108	31.8
Graduation Status	Licence	252	74.3
	Postgraduate	87	25.7
Status	Regular	300	88.5
	Contractual	21	6.2
	Paid	18	5.3
Career Step	Candidate Teacher	18	5.3
	Teacher	111	32.7
	Expert Teacher	177	52.2
	Head teacher	33	9.7

Data collection tools

In the study, the personal information form, the "*Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Scale (SGLO)*" developed by Öz and Baloğlu (2023), for which the necessary permissions were obtained, and the "*Teacher Motivation Scale*" developed by Yıldız and Taşgın (2020) were used as data collection tools.

The social entrepreneurial leadership scale was developed by Öz and Baloğlu (2023) and consists of 24 items in 4 dimensions. The dimensions of the scale are social responsibility (6 items), innovation (7 items), influence (5 items) and sustainability (6 items). The statements in the scale are in the form of an equally spaced scale consisting of the options "None (1), Little (2), Moderate (3), Much (4) and Full (5)". High scores obtained from the scale indicate that the participants have a high level of participation, while low scores indicate a low level of participation. According to the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted within the scope of this research, the chi-square of the scale ($X2 = 434.65$); (sd=243, p<.00), (x2 /sd)=1.78 was calculated. The ratio of the chi-square value to the degree of freedom between 0 and 2 indicates perfect fit (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013). This ratio has a value in the perfect fit range in this research. In order to test the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient was examined and the Cronbach's Alpha values of the sub-dimensions of the scale were found to be .95 in the Social Responsibility dimension; .91 in the Innovation dimension; .94 in the Influence dimension; .94 in the Sustainability dimension. The Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient obtained for the entire scale was found to be .97. This result shows that it is highly reliable for research.

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Teacher motivation scale: It was developed by Yıldız and Taşgın (2020) and consists of 3 dimensions and 28 items. The dimensions of the scale are school management (11 items), professional satisfaction and personal development (10 items) and teaching process and students (7 items). The statements in the scale were prepared in a 5-point Likert type consisting of the options "I completely agree (1), I disagree (2), I partially agree (3), I agree (4) and I completely agree (5)". High scores obtained from the scale indicate that the participants have a high level of participation, and low scores indicate that they have a low level of participation. As a result of the CFA, the fit index values were found to be X^2= 887.75 (sd=344, p=.00), X^2/sd=2.35. This rate also has a value in the perfect fit range in this study. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated for the reliability of the scale. The internal consistency coefficient for the "School Management" sub-dimension was calculated as .96, the internal consistency coefficient for the "Professional Satisfaction and Personal Development" sub-dimension as .91, and the internal consistency coefficient for the "Teaching Process and Students" sub-dimension as .86. The internal consistency coefficient for the entire scale was calculated as .94.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected via "Google Form" between 01.05.2024 and 01.07.2024. The research began with a comprehensive literature review. The variables of the research were determined according to literature findings. Necessary permissions were obtained for the implementation of the data collection tools. A personal information form developed by researchers was added to the data collection tool. Within the scope of the research, 1743 of the 1859 teachers constituting the study universe were reached via e-mail and WhatsApp application, and feedback was obtained from 339 teachers. The data

collected were analyzed using the SPSS package program. The data were analyzed with the help of pairwise and multiple comparison techniques. Before the analysis, the distribution properties of the data sets were tried to be determined. It was investigated whether the data showed normal distribution according to the variables to be compared. Accordingly, When the descriptive statistics for the social entrepreneurial leadership and teacher motivation scale variables were examined; it was seen that the skewness and kurtosis values of all variables were between +1.5 and -1.5, and the arithmetic mean, mode and median values were close to each other. With this result, it was determined that the variables of social entrepreneurial leadership and teacher motivation had a normal distribution. For this reason, parametric analyses were applied in the comparisons regarding the examination of intergroup differences in the study (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In the study, the perceived social entrepreneurial leadership and motivation levels of teachers working in the relevant schools were determined in terms of frequency and percentage values. The correlational relationship between social entrepreneurial leadership and teacher motivation was determined by Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis and multiple regression analysis was performed in order to determine the level of prediction. The value of $p < .05$ was accepted for the significance level of statistical tests. In our study, while interpreting the arithmetic means regarding the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators and the motivation levels of teachers, 1.00–1.79 was evaluated as "not at all", 1.80–2.49 as "little", 2.50–3.19 as "medium", 3.20–3.99 as "a lot", and 4.00–5.00 was evaluated as "full".

Findings

In this section, the findings obtained in the context of the research questions are given. The findings are presented and interpreted in tables.

Findings regarding school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics and teachers' motivation levels

The arithmetic means and standard deviation values regarding the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators and the motivation levels of teachers according to teachers' perceptions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Social Entrepreneurial Leadership and Teacher Motivation Levels

Scales and Sub-dimensions	n	$\bar{X}$	SS
Social Entrepreneurial Leadership	339	3.97	1.00
Social Responsibility	339	4.24	0.99
Innovation	339	3.73	1.05
Influencing	339	4.02	1.08
Sustainability	339	3.96	1.05
Teacher Motivation	339	4.36	0.65
Professional Satisfaction and Personal Development	339	4.31	0.68
School Management	339	4.26	0.83
Teaching Process and Students	339	4.58	0.57

According to Table 2, it is seen that teachers' general perceptions of social entrepreneurial leadership ($\bar{X}$=3.97, SD=1.00) are at the *"very"*

level, in the dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership, it is at the "very"
level in the dimensions of innovation ($\overline{X}$=3.73, SD=1.05) and sustainability ($\overline{X}$=3.96, SD=1.05), and it is at the " *full* " *level* in the dimensions of social responsibility ($\overline{X}$=4.24, SD=0.99) and influence ($\overline{X}$=4.02, SD=1.08) . It is observed that teacher motivation is high at the "full" level in both general teacher motivation ($\overline{X}$=4.36, SD=0.65) and professional satisfaction and personal development ($\overline{X}$=4.31, SD=0.68), school *administration* ($\overline{X}$=4.26, SD=0.83) and teaching process and students ($\overline{X}$=4.58, SD=0.57) dimensions.

Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics of School Administrators and Teachers' Motivation

In order to determine the relationship between the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators and teachers' motivations according to teachers' perceptions, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was conducted since our data showed a normal distribution, and the analysis results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Conducted to Determine the Relationship Between Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics of School Administrators and Teachers' Motivation

Points	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.Social Entrepreneurial Leadership	1	,962 **	,960 **	,972 **	,965 **	,684 **	,632 **	,666 **	,512 **
2. Social Responsibility	,962 **	1	,889 **	,918 **	,914 **	,632 **	,578 **	,610 **	,494 **
3. Innovation	,960 **	,889 **	1	,916 **	,885 **	,665 **	,619 **	,651 **	,482 **
4. Influence	,972 **	,918 **	,916 **	1	,929 **	,658 **	,601 **	,649 **	,487 **
5. Sustainability	,965 **	,914 **	,885 **	,929 **	1	,682 **	,637 **	,658 **	,513 **
6. Teacher Motivation	,684 **	,632 **	,665 **	,658 **	,682 **	1	,916 **	,927 **	,870 **
7. Professional Satisfaction and Personal Development	,632 **	,578 **	,619 **	,601 **	,637 **	,916 **	1	,726 **	,804 **
8. School Administration	,666 **	,610 **	,651 **	,649 **	,658 **	,927 **	,726 **	1	,694 **
9. Educational Process and Students	,512 **	,494 **	,482 **	,487 **	,513 **	,870 **	,804 **	,694 **	1

N:339, ** p<0.01

When Table 3 is examined, it is seen that there is a generally high level (r=0.69; p<0.01) positive relationship between social entrepreneurial leadership and teacher motivation. This situation reveals the finding that the increase in social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators positively affects teacher motivation.

Findings on the Prediction Level of School Administrators' Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics on Teacher Motivation

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine to what extent the social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics of school administrators predict teacher motivation according to teachers' perceptions, and the analysis results are presented in Table 4. The assumptions of the multiple linear regression analysis were checked, and the variance inflation factor (VIF) value of the variables was examined for the problem of multiple linearity, and since this

value was below 5, it was decided that there was no problem of multiple linearity.

Table 4.

Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Showing the Prediction Level of School Administrators' Social Entrepreneurial Leadership Characteristics on Teacher Motivation

Predictor Variables		Predicted Variables		
		Professional Satisfaction and Personal Development	School Management	Teaching Process and Students
		[R=0.652; R2 ꞊0.425]	[R=0.677; R2 ꞊0.458]	[R=0.518; R2 ꞊0.269]
		F=61.757	F=70.571	F= 30.677
		$p = 0.00$ **	$p = 0.00$ **	$p = 0.00$ **
		VIF= 3.348	VIF= 2.281	VIF= 3.057
Still	t	21,904	14,878	28,782
	p	0.00 **	0.00 **	0.00 **
Social Responsibility	β	-0.157	-0.154	0.127
	t	-1,330	-1,346	0.953
	p	0.18	0.18	0.34
Innovation	β	0.359	0.313	0.114
	t	3,279	2,951	0.920
	p	0.00 **	0.00 **	0.35
Influencing	β	-0.101	0.139	-0.063
	t	-0.722	1,023	-0.397
	p	0.47	0.30	0.69
Sustainability	β	0.557	0.392	0.355
	t	4,480	3,247	2,529
	p	0.00 **	0.00 **	0.01 **

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01

According to Table 4, the dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership in the model, namely social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability, have a high level and significant relationship with teacher motivation, professional satisfaction and personal development (R=0.652; p<0.01). The dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership explain approximately 43% of the total

variance in professional satisfaction and personal development (R2=0.425). The relative importance order of the predictor variables on professional satisfaction and personal development is social responsibility (β=-0.157), innovation (β=0.359), influence (β=-0.101) and sustainability (β=0.557). According to the t-test results, social responsibility (t=-1.330), innovation (t=3.279), influence (t=-0.722) and sustainability (t=4.480) are seen to be significant predictors of professional satisfaction and personal development.

According to Table 4, the dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership in the model, namely social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability, have a high level and significant relationship with teacher motivation and school management (R=0.677; p<0.01). The dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership explain approximately 46% of the total variance in school management (R2=0.458). The relative order of importance of the predictor variables on school management is social responsibility (β=-0.154), innovation (β=0.313), influence (β=-0.139) and sustainability (β=0.392). According to the t-test results, social responsibility (t=-1.346), innovation (t=3.951), influence (t=1.023) and sustainability (t=3.247) are seen to be significant predictors of school management.

According to Table 4, the dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership in the model, namely social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability variables, have a high level and significant relationship with teacher motivation, teaching process and students (R=0.518; p<0.01). The dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership explain approximately 27% of the total variance in the teaching process and students (R2=0.269). The relative order of importance of the predictor variables on the teaching process and students is social responsibility (β=-0.127), innovation (β=0.114), influence (β=-0.063)

and sustainability (β=0.355). According to the t-test results, it is seen that social responsibility (t=0.953), innovation (t=0.920), influence (t=-0.397) and sustainability (t=2.529) are significant predictors of the teaching process and students.

Discussion

Leadership in today's educational environments requires an understanding that encompasses not only administrative processes but also social change and value creation. In this context, school administrators with social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics play an important role in increasing teachers' motivation. Leaders who are sensitive to social problems and develop inclusive and innovative solutions within the school allow teachers to see themselves as part of a more meaningful structure (Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz & Pashiardis, 2020). This type of leadership approach contributes not only to teachers' professional but also to their individual development. Elements such as intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are among the positive effects of the social value-oriented leadership approach on teachers (Wronka-Pośpiech, 2016). Therefore, the social entrepreneurial leadership approach should be evaluated among a new leadership paradigm that nourishes teacher motivation.

In the literature, there are studies that find the leadership levels of school principals at a high level (Dasci Sonmez et al., 2024; Köse et al., 2024; Pan & Chen, 2021; Pazarcık, 2016; Uslu, 2018). In the current study, the participants' perceptions of social entrepreneurship leadership, "very" or "full" in all dimensions, indicate that they have a "high" level of social entrepreneurial leadership perception. It is seen that this finding coincides with the studies in literature. In the study

conducted by Cemaloğlu (2007), it was found that school principals exhibited low-level leadership behaviors.

Various studies in the literature reveal that teacher motivation is generally at a high level. For example, in the study conducted by Demir (2023), it is emphasized that teachers' professional autonomy is closely related to high motivation levels. In addition, Köse et al. (2024) state that the leadership styles exhibited by school principals have a decisive effect on teacher motivation, and especially transformational and supportive leadership stand out in this context. These findings show that teacher motivation is shaped not only by individual but also by organizational and administrative factors, and that this interaction results in a strong professional commitment and increased performance (Özdoğru & Aydın, 2016; Yalçınkaya, et al., 2021; Ye et al., 2024).

There are studies showing that the leadership behaviors of school administrators directly affect teachers' motivation (Baloğlu, 2012; Buluç, 2009; Ereş, 2011; Eyal & Roth, 2011; Finnigan, 2010; Kılıç et al., 2023; Köse et al., 2024; Kurt, 2015; Sucuoğlu & Uluğ, 2022; Thoonen et al., 2011; Yalçınkaya et al., 2021). Ada et al. (2014) also emphasizes that strong and trustworthy leadership increases teachers' motivation and the importance of effective administrative support for successful work. Similarly, it was concluded that teachers' motivation to participate in school management increased. This result coincides with studies such as Kılıç (2019) and Bıçakçılar (2021). Kılıç (2019) stated in his research that the proactive and initiative-taking behaviors of school administrators positively affect teacher motivation. In addition, it was determined that the dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership predict the teaching process and student dimensions of teacher motivation. This finding shows that as the perceived leadership

characteristics of school administrators increase, teachers' motivation regarding the teaching process and students increases. Another study conducted by Demir (2018) reveals that the language used by school administrators in the teaching process significantly affects teacher motivation. In this way, the effects of social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics on teacher motivation are consistently supported by the findings in the literature and show that the strong leadership characteristics of school administrators play an important role in increasing teachers' motivation levels.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that teachers' perceptions of school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership characteristics are generally high and that these perceptions have a significant and strong relationship with teacher motivation. It was determined that various dimensions of social entrepreneurial leadership, such as social responsibility, innovation, influence and sustainability, are positively related to different areas of teacher motivation. This situation shows that social entrepreneurial leadership can be an effective element in increasing teachers' professional satisfaction, supporting their personal development and strengthening their commitment to the teaching process. In this context, supporting and developing school administrators' social entrepreneurial leadership skills can positively contribute to the overall performance of the school by increasing teacher motivation.

Limitations and Recommendations

Although this study reveals important results regarding the relationship between school principals' social entrepreneurial leadership levels and teacher motivation, there are some limitations

when interpreting the findings. Firstly, the research is limited to the participation of 339 teachers in a province located in the Central Anatolia Region of Türkiye. Although this sample provided rich and in-depth data, the findings may not be generalizable to a wider group of teachers in different regions or countries. Future studies could expand the sample size to include a more diverse group of teachers from various geographical regions, school types, and cultural contexts, thus increasing the generalizability of the results.

Another limitation is that the study only focused on the perception of teachers. Although the views of teachers are important, it would be beneficial to include different perspectives such as the views of students, school administrators and policy makers in future studies. Another limitation can be considered as the fact that this study was conducted using a quantitative research method. Considering the limitations of quantitative data collection methods, it can be suggested to support it with qualitative or even mixed studies. In addition, it can be suggested to conduct research on other types of leadership that are thought to have an effect on teacher motivation. It can be suggested to conduct studies that can reveal the relationship between social entrepreneurial leadership and issues such as job satisfaction, sustainability, student success and workforce efficiency. In addition, training, workshops, conferences or congresses can be organized to increase the social entrepreneurial leadership skills of school administrators and increase teacher motivation.

Social entrepreneurial leadership, in addition to its positive effects, may also contain potential risks such as depletion of material and moral resources in the process of creating social impact, charismatic leadership increasing organizational dependency, pushing employees' personal boundaries, and emergence of profit-loss imbalances in the

name of social benefit. Such results are important in understanding the practical limits of social entrepreneurial leadership. However, more empirical research is needed to reveal whether these effects are systematic and direct results.

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Leading with Vision in Vietnamese Education: How Transformational Leadership Shapes Professional Learning Communities Through the Lens of Female Educators

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Abstract	Article Info
This study explores the relationship between transformational leadership and the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in public schools in Hanoi, focusing on the perspectives of female educators, including teachers and school managers. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was applied, using stratified random sampling to collect data from 360 female participants (207 teachers, 141 vice-principals, and 12 principals) across primary, secondary, and high schools. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire that assessed three dimensions of transformational leadership—Setting Direction (SD), Developing People (DP), and Restructuring the Organization (RO)—along with PLC effectiveness using the PLCA-R instrument. Reliability was confirmed through high Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (ranging from 0.717 to 0.949), and exploratory factor analysis (EFA) demonstrated the model's validity. The results from Pearson correlation analysis indicated	

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strong positive relationships between all dimensions of transformational leadership and PLC effectiveness, with particularly significant correlations between leadership and Supportive Relationships (SCR), and Collective Learning and Application (CLA). The study found that transformational leadership had a strong influence on the "soft" elements of Professional Learning Communities (such as collaboration, collective learning, and shared vision), but had a negligible impact on the "hard" elements related to organizational structure, thereby emphasizing the central but limited role of leadership in developing a learning culture in public schools in Hanoi. These findings offer valuable insights into how transformational leadership can enhance PLC effectiveness in Vietnam's educational context, providing implications for leadership development and policymaking. However, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and the study's focus on Hanoi's public schools calls for future research in diverse educational settings across Vietnam. Longitudinal and qualitative studies would further deepen the understanding of the long-term impacts of transformational leadership on PLCs.

Cite as:

Introduction

Effective leadership is critical to educational success and is fundamental to fostering institutional effectiveness, collaborative environments, and continuous learning. During times of transformation, leadership's role becomes even more pivotal as it steers educational institutions through change and nurtures a culture of ongoing improvement. Among various leadership models, transformational leadership stands out for its proven impact on developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), essential for enhancing teacher collaboration and professional growth. This model emphasizes inspiring and motivating individuals toward a shared vision, promoting individual growth while fostering collective responsibility, teamwork, and innovation—key elements for educational reform (Day et al., 2016; Thien et al., 2022).

In this study, Leithwood & Jantzi (2006) chose the transformational leadership model over the Bass and Avolio model due to its broader focus on leadership practices specific to educational settings. Leithwood & Jantzi's (2006) framework emphasizes vision development, collaboration, and continuous learning—core components that align well with the characteristics of PLCs. While the Bass and Avolio model is widely used in organizational leadership, it tends to focus more on transactional aspects and individual motivation, which makes it less applicable to the dynamic and communal aspects of educational leadership in the context of PLCs.

In Vietnam, the need for school administrators to adopt transformational leadership practices is central to ongoing educational reforms aimed at improving teaching quality and student outcomes. These reforms emphasize the importance of leadership that inspires and motivates educators while cultivating a culture of shared responsibility among staff. However, while transformational leadership has shown positive results in global studies (Zhang et al., 2022), its specific impact in the Vietnamese educational context remains underexplored. Traditional practices and contemporary demands in Vietnam present unique challenges and opportunities for the implementation of transformational leadership strategies. PLC practices in Vietnamese schools, characterized by hierarchical structures and limited resources, also add to the complexity of adopting such leadership styles effectively.

Previous research has established a positive link between transformational leadership and PLC success (Hord, 1997; Stoll et al., 2006), but the influence of cultural, institutional, and socio-political factors in Vietnam's educational landscape has not been fully addressed. This gap highlights the need for research focusing on how transformational leadership can be tailored to the specific context of Vietnamese schools. By examining the role of transformational leadership in the establishment and functioning of PLCs in Hanoi, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of how these leadership practices can be effectively implemented within the unique Vietnamese educational environment.

Although much of the existing literature on transformational leadership and PLCs is foundational, it is becoming outdated, and more recent studies are needed to reflect the evolving dynamics of educational leadership. The urgency of this research is reinforced by Vietnam's current educational reforms, which call for collaborative, teacher-centered professional development. Understanding the role of leadership in fostering such environments is crucial for advancing these reforms. This study aims to provide insights into how transformational leadership influences PLCs and to offer practical recommendations for leadership development and policy initiatives that can drive sustainable improvements in Vietnamese education. Through this exploration, the research will contribute to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in Vietnam and support the ongoing educational transformation.

Review of the Literature

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are collaborative networks of educators that focus on improving teaching practices and student learning outcomes through shared commitment and participation. Defined as groups wherein educators regularly engage in collective learning and professional development, PLCs emphasize collaborative inquiry and reflection on teaching methodologies (Hudson, 2023) Hudson (2023). This framework promotes an environment where teachers support one another in refining pedagogical practices while cultivating a strong sense of community and shared responsibility (Admiraal et al., 2021)

Recent research highlights that effective PLCs can lead to sustainable educational improvements by fostering continuous professional growth among educators (Krabonja et al., 2024). They encompass various aspects of professional learning, such as promoting teacher leadership, enhancing collaboration, and addressing diverse educational needs (Alzayed & Alabdulkareem, 2020). Essentially, PLCs are designed to create a culture of shared learning, where educators collaboratively explore instructional strategies, share best practices, and ultimately drive student achievement (Lee & Ip, 2021). As such, PLCs serve as vital mechanisms for professional development that align educators' individual goals with broader educational objectives.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership has been a focal point in educational research, particularly represented by the Leithwood & Jantzi (2006) model and the Full-Range Leadership Model (Avolio & Bass, 1991)The Leithwood & Jantzi model delineates transformational leadership into three main categories: Setting Directions, Developing People, and Redesigning the Organization. Each category comprises specific practices that foster a collaborative school culture and promote professional growth, ultimately enhancing student achievement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006). In contrast, the Full-Range Leadership Model encompasses transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles, emphasizing a continuum of leadership behaviors that cater to varying motivational needs (Bass, 1985; Stewart, 2006).

While both models advocate for improving organizational outcomes, the Leithwood & Jantzi model concentrates specifically on the educational context, providing a clearer framework for addressing the complexities of school leadership and its direct impact on teaching and learning environments (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). In particular, its focus on setting shared goals and fostering a professional community aligns more closely with the collective aspirations of educational institutions. Moreover, current research highlights the effectiveness of transformational leadership in increasing teacher motivation and student performance, suggesting that the Leithwood & Jantzi model offers a more robust approach for educational settings compared to the broader Full-Range model (Abdullah et al., 2018; Litz & Scott, 2016; Marks & Printy, 2003). Therefore, adopting the Leithwood & Jantzi model can lead to more focused and effective leadership practices that enhance educational outcomes.

PLCs in the Context of Vietnamese Education

PLCs are relatively new in Vietnam, with implementation varying widely across schools. Recent studies indicate that while PLCs have the potential to enhance teachers' professional skills and shape school teachers' job happiness levels (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025), their application and sustainability face numerous challenges (Doan & Pham, 2022; Hong-Van Thi Dinh et al., 2023). Key obstacles include insufficient resources and support, which hinder the effectiveness of PLCs (Phan, 2017; Saito & Tsukui, 2008). Research has highlighted the need for facilities, financial support, and management improvements to enable more effective PLC operations (Linh & Kasule, 2022; Hong-Van Thi Dinh & To-Trinh Thi Tran, 2024).

In light of educational innovation, it is essential to continue exploring PLC models suitable for Vietnam's unique conditions to enhance education quality (Hong-Van Thi Dinh et al., 2023). The community of practice model has demonstrated significant advantages in improving teachers' professional capacity (Hong et al., 2024). Additionally, cultural and systemic factors are crucial in implementing PLCs in Vietnam. Traditional hierarchical structures and a lack of collaborative culture can impede the effectiveness of PLCs (Nguyen, 2019). Systemic issues, such as limited resources and disparities in professional development opportunities, further complicate the implementation of PLC activities (Doan & Pham, 2022). Addressing these factors is vital for successfully integrating PLCs into the Vietnamese education system.

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and PLCs

The role of transformational leadership in PLCs has been well-documented in both previous (Hord, 1997; Minckler, 2013; Olivier & Hipp, 2010) and recent study (Zhang et al., 2022), confirming that transformational leadership directly or indirectly influences PLCs (Valckx et al., 2019). Transformational leadership in secondary schools fosters increased teacher collaboration and a sense of community (Minckler, 2013), inspiring educators to enhance educational quality (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leaders cultivate collaborative environments, motivate teachers, and provide clear direction and support for cooperative activities (Leithwood et al., 2008; Wang, 2016).

These leaders also enhance organizational relationships and commitment (Leithwood, 1994) and improve PLC effectiveness by establishing meeting times and promoting a collaborative culture (Benoliel & Schechter, 2017). Furthermore, transformational leadership encourages teacher participation in professional activities and

decision-making (Marks & Printy, 2003). Transformational leadership is crucial for developing and sustaining effective learning communities (Boyd & Hord, 1994; Burns, 1978).

Despite the extensive literature on the relationship between transformational leadership and PLCs, significant gaps still need to be discovered, particularly concerning the Vietnamese context. More research is necessary to explore how transformational leadership impacts PLCs in Vietnamese schools. Recent studies have primarily introduced PLC concepts without assessing the impact of transformational leadership amidst ongoing educational reforms (Hong-Van Thi Dinh et al., 2023). This underscores the need for further investigation into how transformational leadership can be leveraged to enhance the implementation and effectiveness of PLCs in Vietnam. We suppose the following hypotheses:

H1: There is a positive relationship between Setting Direction and PLC.

H2: There is a positive relationship between Developing People and PLC.

H3: There is a positive relationship between Restructuring Organization and PLC.

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

Study Design. This research utilized a quantitative, cross-sectional design to explore the perspectives of public school administrators and teachers in Hanoi, Vietnam. Data were collected at a single time using a structured questionnaire administered via Google Forms.

Population. The study population comprised administrators and teachers working in public schools under the supervision of the Hanoi Department of Education and Training. The participants were selected from schools across three levels: primary, secondary, and high school.

Sampling Method. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across different school levels (primary, secondary, and high school) and locations (urban, suburban, rural). This method was used to capture the diversity of experiences and perspectives from administrators and teachers across various types of schools.

Sample Size. The total sample size consisted of 360 participants, divided as follows: 207 teachers, 141 vice-principals, and 12 principals. The sampling was done to reflect the distribution of educators and administrators across the three school levels and different locations within Hanoi.

Measurement of Variables

Demographic Information. We collected basic participant data, including age, gender, position, and education level.

Transformational Leadership. We measured transformational leadership using nine items from Leithwood & Jantzi's (2006) model across three dimensions: Setting Direction (SD), Developing People (DP), and Restructuring Organization (RO). We assessed each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Professional Learning Community Assessment (PLCA-R). This study employs the PLCs assessment scale developed by Olivier et al. (2010), which is shortened to 12 items across six domains: shared and supportive leadership (SSL); shared values and vision (SVV); collective learning and application (CLA); shared personal practice (SPP);

supportive conditions—relationships (SCR); and supportive conditions—structures (SCS). We assessed each item on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

All instruments were translated from English to Vietnamese using Brislin's (1970) back-translation method, involving forward translation by two bilingual experts and back-translation by two additional experts. A pilot group assessed the translated instruments' semantic, functional, and conceptual equivalence.

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26.0, including descriptive statistics for demographic data and inferential statistics to examine relationships between transformational leadership and PLC effectiveness.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Participants (N=360)

	Characteristics	Number	Proportion
Age	Under 30 years old	65	18.1%
	30 to 40 years old	112	31.1%
	40 to 50 years old	118	32.8%
	50 to 60 years old	65	18.1%
Position	Teacher	207	57.5%
	Vice Principal	141	39.2%

	Principal	12	3.3%
	Primary	84	23.3%
Teaching Level	Secondary	84	23.3%
	High school	192	53.3%

The age analysis of 360 female participants divided them into four groups: under 30 (18.1%), 30–40 (31.1%), 40–50 (32.8%), and 50–60 (18.1%), with no one over 60. Younger teachers under 30 were less experienced, while those 50–60 had extensive experience. Most participants were teachers (57.5%), followed by vice-principals (39.2%) and principals (3.3%), reflecting the organizational structure where teachers dominate. High school teachers comprised 53.3% of the sample, while primary and secondary teachers each accounted for 23.3%, highlighting differences in participation by teaching level.

Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Table 2.

Assessment of factor reliability using Cronbach's Alpha Index

Type	Factors	Observed variables	Variable-total correlation	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient
Transformational Leadership	Developing people (DP)	DP1	0.827	0.917
		DP2	0.820	
		DP3	0.852	
	Redesigning the organization (RO)	RO1	0.839	0.916
		RO2	0.875	

		RO3	0.784	
	Setting directions (SD)	SD1	0.859	
		SD2	0.905	0.949
		SD3	0.922	
PLC	Share and Supportive Leadership (SSL)	SSL1	0.625	0.768
		SSL2	0.625	
	Share Values and Vision (SVV)	SVV1	0.612	0.754
		SVV2	0.612	
	Collective Learning and Application (CLA)	CLA1	0.690	0.816
		CLA2	0.690	
	Share Personal Practice (SPP)	SPP1	0.565	0.717
		SPP2	0.565	
	Supportive Conditions – Relationships (SCR)	SCR1	0.852	0.920
		SCR2	0.852	
	Supportive Conditions – Structures (SCS)	SCS1	0.883	0.937
		SCS2	0.883	

The analysis results show that all factors in the model have good reliability, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.754 to 0.949, all exceeding the threshold of 0.7; indicating that the scales have a high level of internal consistency. In particular, the factors Developing People (DP), Redesigning the Organization (RO) and Setting Directions (SD) all have Alpha > 0.9, reflecting excellent reliability. In addition, all observed variables have adjusted item-total correlation coefficients > 0.7, confirming the homogeneity and appropriateness of each variable in the scale structure. Thus, the scales are all eligible for exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and subsequent analysis steps.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Table 3.

Model Fit

		Independent Variable	Dependent Variable
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.502	0.920
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1903.057	4378.595
	Df	66	36
	Sig.	0.000	0.000
Component		6	1
Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	Cumulative %	86.236%	81.636%

The results in Table 3 show that the data fully meets the conditions for conducting exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Specifically, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) index reached 0.920, which is considered

"excellent" according to Kaiser's (1974) classification, indicating that the sample is large enough and the correlations between variables are strong enough to explore the latent factor structure. At the same time, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity has a value of p = 0.000, rejecting the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is a unit, confirming a significant relationship between the observed variables. Thus, the data fully meets the necessary premises to conduct EFA reliably.

Table 4.

Factor rotation matrix

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PLC	SCS1	0.969						
	SCS2	0.966						
	SCR1		0.953					
	SCR2		0.945					
	CLA2			0.918				
	CLA1			0.914				
	SSL2				0.905			
	SSL1				0.889			
	SVV1					0.923		
	SVV2					0.835		
	SPP1						0.884	
	SPP2						0.879	

Transformational Leadership	SD3	0.945
	RO2	0.937
	SD2	0.926
	DP3	0.918
	RO1	0.906
	DP2	0.883
	DP1	0.882
	RO3	0.872
	SD1	0.859

The rotated matrix reflects the factor structure consistent with the proposed theoretical model, with the observed variables loading strongly on the corresponding factors, and the loading coefficients are all greater than 0.55, meeting the required level to confirm the concept's representativeness (Hair et al., 2010). There is no cross-loading phenomenon - that is, no variable significantly loads on more than one factor, ensuring unidimensionality and discriminant validity between the Transformational Leadership and Professional Learning Community (PLC) components. Specifically, variables such as SCS1 and SCS2 (belonging to the factor "Supportive Conditions - Structures") have high loading coefficients (0.966 and 0.969, respectively), indicating a strong internal relationship between the measured variables and the factors. Similarly, the group of variables representing Transformational Leadership, such as SD3, RO2, and DP3, loaded on one factor with coefficients ranging from 0.859 to 0.945, clearly reflecting the three-component structure of transformational leadership.

The study showed that the three components of transformational leadership—Development Orientation (SD), People Development (DP), and Organizational Restructuring (RO)—although distinct in theory, are perceived by teachers as a unified whole in practice with high factor loadings (0.859–0.945) and excellent Cronbach's Alpha reliability (0.916–0.949). This phenomenon reflects the central leadership culture in Vietnamese public schools, where leadership behaviors are closely linked to a key leader, with no clear distinction between roles. This is consistent with Hallinger and Bryant's (2013) view that, in the East Asian context, leadership behaviors are often integrated, making it difficult to separate strategic, transformational, and technical leadership. The results of the study suggest that leadership theory needs to be adapted to local cultural and organizational contexts to reflect practice accurately.

Pearson Correlation Analysis

Table 5.

Correlations between factors

		SDPRO*	SSL	SVV	CLA	SPP	SCR	SCS
SDPRO	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.021	0.390*	0.586*	0.064	0.712**	-0.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.692	0.000	0.000	0.227	0.000	0.175
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
SSL	Pearson Correlation	-0.021	1	0.113*	-0.124*	0.471**	0.030	-0.038
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.692		0.033	0.018	0.000	0.572	0.477
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
SVV	Pearson Correlation	0.390**	0.113*	1	0.241**	0.038	0.312**	-0.095
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.033		0.000	0.472	0.000	0.072
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360

CLA	Pearson Correlation	0.586**	-0.124*	0.241**	1	-0.045	0.622**	0.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.018	0.000		0.399	0.000	0.187
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
SPP	Pearson Correlation	0.064	0.471**	0.038	-0.045	1	0.039	0.026
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.227	0.000	0.472	0.399		0.463	0.624
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
SCR	Pearson Correlation	0.712**	0.030	0.312**	0.622**	0.039	1	0.047
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.572	0.000	0.000	0.463		0.371
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360
SCS	Pearson Correlation	-0.072	-0.038	-0.095	0.070	0.026	0.047	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.175	0.477	0.072	0.187	0.624	0.371	
	N	360	360	360	360	360	360	360

SDPRO. Transformational Leadership

Pearson correlation results showed significant relationships between the components of Transformational Leadership and the elements of Professional Learning Communities (PLC), providing a solid basis for subsequent confirmatory analyses.

Specifically, the strong correlations between transformational leadership and SCR ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$) and between transformational leadership and CLA ($r = 0.586$, $p < 0.01$) reflect the central role of transformational leadership in promoting supportive relationships and collective learning – two core components of PLC. This is consistent with the theory that transformational leadership helps form a collaborative culture, encourage initiative, and improve organizational effectiveness (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006)

In contrast, weak or nonsignificant correlations between SCS and other factors suggest that structural conditions such as time, technology, or

organizational processes are not clearly linked to learning components. This finding suggests the limits of leadership influence in the context of limited material conditions.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)

Table 6.

Multivariate effects of transformational leadership

	Effect	Value	F	Hypo-thesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squa-red
Inter-cept	Pillai's Trace	0.976	2360.053	6.000	350.000	0.000	0.976
	Wilks' Lambda	0.024	2360.053	6.000	350.000	0.000	0.976
	Hotelling's Trace	40.458	2360.053	6.000	350.000	0.000	0.976
	Roy's Largest Root	40.458	2360.053	6.000	350.000	0.000	0.976
Transformational Leadership	Pillai's Trace	0.755	13.696	24.000	1412.000	0.000	0.189
	Wilks' Lambda	0.306	20.600	24.000	1222.214	0.000	0.256
	Hotelling's Trace	2.076	30.141	24.000	1394.000	0.000	0.342
	Roy's Largest Root	1.981	116.530	6.000	353.000	0.000	0.665

Multivariate analysis shows that transformational leadership has a significant and statistically significant multivariate effect on all six professional learning community components (PLC) components. All multivariate test indices – including Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda,

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Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root – have p-values of 0.000, indicating that the differences between levels of transformational leadership are real and statistically significant. In particular, the Partial Eta Squared (η²) indices range from 0.189 to 0.665, exceeding the threshold of 0.14 according to Cohen's (1988) classification, indicating the large effect size. This suggests that transformational leadership behaviors – such as supporting innovation, communicating vision, and providing a growth orientation – strongly impact the level of PLC development, with some components showing very high levels of influence (η² close to 0.7).

Table 7.

Summary of MANOVA results by transformational leadership

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	SSL	0.718[a]	4	0.179	0.386	0.819	0.004
	SVV	73.473[b]	4	18.368	18.971	0.000	0.176
	CLA	145.229[c]	4	36.307	74.149	0.000	0.455
	SPP	1.996[d]	4	0.499	1.090	0.361	0.012
	SCR	163.539[e]	4	40.885	116.876	0.000	0.568
	SCS	3.592[f]	4	0.898	1.029	0.392	0.011
Intercept	SSL	2128.229	1	2128.229	4571.181	0.000	0.928
	SVV	818.666	1	818.666	845.523	0.000	0.704
	CLA	1488.240	1	1488.240	3039.382	0.000	0.895
	SPP	2085.273	1	2085.273	4555.732	0.000	0.928
	SCR	1320.465	1	1320.465	3774.777	0.000	0.914
	SCS	1759.949	1	1759.949	2017.558	0.000	0.850

Transformational	SSL	0.718	4	0.179	0.386	0.819	0.004
Leadership	SVV	73.473	4	18.368	18.971	0.000	0.176
	CLA	145.229	4	36.307	74.149	0.000	0.455
	SPP	1.996	4	.499	1.090	0.361	0.012
	SCR	163.539	4	40.885	116.876	0.000	0.568
	SCS	3.592	4	0.898	1.029	0.392	0.011
Error	SSL	165.279	355	0.466			
	SVV	343.724	355	0.968			
	CLA	173.826	355	0.490			
	SPP	162.492	355	0.458			
	SCR	124.184	355	0.350			
	SCS	309.672	355	0.872			
Total	SSL	6677.000	360				
	SVV	3883.000	360				
	CLA	6486.000	360				
	SPP	6650.000	360				
	SCR	5968.000	360				
	SCS	5565.000	360				

The MANOVA analysis results in Table 7 show that transformational leadership significantly univariately affects several core components of the professional learning community (PLC). Specifically, transformational leadership has a substantial impact on Shared Vision and Common Values (SVV) with F = 18.971, p < 0.001 and Partial η^2 = 0.176, a powerful effect on Collective Learning and Application (CLA) with F = 74.149, p < 0.001, Partial η^2 = 0.455, and a powerful impact on Supportive Conditions – Relationships (SCR) with F = 116.876, p < 0.001, Partial η^2 = 0.568. According to Cohen's (1988) scale, these η^2 values all reached or exceeded the threshold for significant influence,

suggesting that inspirational and innovation-supportive leadership behaviors strongly promote PLC's "soft" aspects, such as collaboration, shared values, and team cohesion. However, the results also showed that the remaining three components, namely Shared Strategic Leadership (SSL), Reflective Practice (SPP), and Supportive-Structural Conditions (SCS), were not significantly influenced by transformational leadership ($p > 0.05$; $\eta^2 < 0.012$). This suggests that these factors may depend more on the specific organizational context, power hierarchy, and material conditions than individual leadership styles. This finding is consistent with the theoretical framework of Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), which emphasizes the role of transformational leadership in creating a learning culture – but not as the sole factor that governs all the components of a PLC.

Discussion

This study investigated the multidimensional effects of transformational leadership on professional learning communities (PLCs), with significant findings from the MANOVA analysis. The results highlighted that transformational leadership strongly impacts three components of PLCs: Shared Vision and Values (SVV) ($\eta^2 = 0.176$), Collective Learning and Application (CLA) ($\eta^2 = 0.455$), and Supportive Conditions - Relationships (SCR) ($\eta^2 = 0.568$). These findings align with Leithwood and Jantzi's (2006) work, which affirms that transformational leadership plays a crucial role in guiding vision, fostering a continuous learning environment, and building reciprocal relationships. Specifically, the SCR component was most influenced, emphasizing transformational leadership's ability to create a psychologically safe space for sharing and learning (Abendaño, 2024). This is consistent with global research, including studies by Hallinger and Heck (2010), Leithwood and Jantzi (2008), and Zhang et al. (2022),

which underscore the pivotal role of transformational leadership in enhancing educational quality and fostering environments conducive to professional collaboration and student achievement.

In addition to the positive impacts, this study also observed limitations in the effect of transformational leadership on some PLC components. Notably, transformational leadership did not significantly influence the remaining three components: Shared Strategic Leadership (SSL), Reflective Practice (SPP), and Supporting-Structural Conditions (SCS). This suggests that these components might be more influenced by existing organizational structures, professional cultures, and available resources rather than leadership style alone (Jabeen et al., 2019). Specifically, the SCS component could be constrained by higher-level policies and budgets, which are often beyond the direct control of school leaders (Hord, 1997). These results echo the findings of Stoll et al. (2006), who suggested that physical barriers, such as organizational structures and resources, often require system-level interventions. The correlation analysis further revealed strong associations between transformational leadership and SCR ($r = 0.712$) and CLA ($r = 0.586$), underscoring the essential role of leadership in promoting collaborative learning and supportive relationships. However, the weak or non-significant correlations, particularly between SCS and other components, reflect the independent existence of physical structural factors distinct from the socio-cultural aspects of PLCs. This observation is in line with Fullan's (2007) multi-layered model of educational change, which proposes that structural and cultural factors evolve at different rates (Ogden, 2017).

These findings are consistent with previous studies, confirming the substantial influence of transformational leadership on the cultural dimensions of PLCs. Leithwood and Sun (2012) similarly emphasized

the transformative effects of leadership on developing a learning culture within schools, reinforcing the effectiveness of transformational leadership in fostering shared values and collective learning. However, the lack of significant influence on structural components corroborates Stoll et al.'s (2006) assertion that physical and organizational barriers require more systemic approaches, rather than relying solely on leadership traits.

The implications of these findings are crucial for stakeholders in the education sector. School leaders should prioritize the development of transformational leadership qualities, particularly in the areas of creating a shared vision and promoting collective learning. Policy makers should allocate additional resources and support mechanisms to address the structural barriers that are less affected by leadership style. These insights align with the conclusions of Linh and Kasule (2022) and Doan and Pham (2022), who highlighted the need for leadership strategies that overcome challenges posed by hierarchical structures and limited resources in the Vietnamese context. Furthermore, training programs should integrate transformational leadership skills with strategies to address structural barriers and enhance PLC effectiveness.

Finally, this study's relevance to the Vietnamese educational context is notable, as PLCs are still developing in many areas (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2025). Phan (2017) and Saito and Tsukui (2008) noted that transformational leadership offers a framework to overcome challenges by promoting collaboration, decentralizing decision-making, and aligning professional development initiatives with teachers' needs. Policy recommendations from this study emphasize the importance of investing in leadership training and resources and fostering autonomy within schools to address systemic barriers and

promote innovation. These findings resonate with global and local perspectives on context-sensitive leadership development (Hong-Van Thi Dinh & To-Trinh Thi Tran, 2024; Eaker et al., 2002), providing valuable insights for educational reform and PLC advancement.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of transformational leadership in enhancing key components of professional learning communities (PLCs), particularly Shared Vision and Values (SVV), Collective Learning and Application (CLA), and Supportive Conditions - Relationships (SCR). These findings confirm that transformational leadership is vital for fostering a collaborative and supportive learning environment. However, the study also reveals that transformational leadership has limited impact on certain components, such as Shared Strategic Leadership (SSL), Reflective Practice (SPP), and Supporting-Structural Conditions (SCS), which are more influenced by organizational structures and available resources. The implications suggest that school leaders should focus on developing transformational leadership traits, while policymakers should invest in resources and support mechanisms to address structural barriers. Overall, this research underscores the need for both leadership development and systemic reforms to effectively build and sustain PLCs in schools, offering practical recommendations for improving educational outcomes.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. The sample was limited to a specific region, which may not represent all educational contexts, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the cross-sectional

design restricts causal conclusions, and future longitudinal studies could explore the long-term effects of transformational leadership on PLCs. Future research should also examine the role of external factors, such as national policies and socio-economic conditions, in influencing the impact of leadership on PLCs. Moreover, investigating the interaction between leadership styles and organizational culture would provide deeper insights into how leadership approaches affect PLC outcomes across various educational settings.

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Exploring the Influence of Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction in the Government Secondary Schools of Hawassa City Administration

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Abstract	Article Info
The purpose of this study was to explore the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction. To achieve this purpose, the phenomenological qualitative research design was employed. The study was conducted in two government secondary schools, where 14 teachers and 4 principals were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings identified servant leaders' qualities, including giving first place for others, serving others' needs, supporting personal and social issues, showing humility, being a role model, and being open, honest, and ethical. The findings further underscored the characteristics of servant leadership that were exhibited by school principals. The	

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teachers feel satisfied when their principals exhibit servant leadership characteristics, such as conceptualization, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically. This revealed that principals' servant leadership characteristics are critical that help to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. The study highlights that school principals should be aware of and practice all servant leadership characteristics to enhance teachers' job satisfaction. Future research should consider expanding the scope to other regions, primary schools, and private schools.

Introduction

Leadership is one of the key driving forces for improving an organization's performance, and it can determine the success and failure of organizations (Akparep et al., 2019). In an educational setting, school leadership and management are considered critical elements for effective institutions, in addition to instruction and learning (Angwaomaodoko, 2023), when they are able to create a stronger, more cooperative, and more suitable environment in their schools (Guarino et al., 2006). Servant leadership is applicable in a variety of contexts, including educational institutions (Rahayani, 2010). It is an important leadership style that helps leaders create a conducive work

environment for employees and organizations (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

A servant leader is defined as a leader who prioritizes the needs of those they lead over their self-interest (Laub, 2004). A unique idea of servant leadership from other leadership is that of the leader as a servant; it places more emphasis on the needs of followers beyond leaders' needs and organizational demands (Greenleaf, 1970; Stone et al., 2004). According to Greenleaf, true leaders should put their workers' well-being first and strive for both their professional and personal development. In contrast to traditional leadership, which prioritizes the needs of the leader over those of the followers, servant leadership prioritizes the needs of the followers. Furthermore, servant leadership behaviors serve as the foundation for pervasive and fertile working environments that enable employees to develop positive and productive attitudes and behaviors toward others and the organization (Bambale & Shamsudin, 2015).

The term 'job satisfaction,' another essential element of the present article, refers to employees' attitude towards the job, and any positive or negative evaluations made of what they do are defined as job satisfaction (Weiss, 2002). Won and Chang (2020) define job satisfaction as a happy or positive emotional state that arises from an evaluation of one's work or work experiences. Job satisfaction can be defined as sets of facets that help as a means to obtain feelings of satisfaction (Aziri, 2011). These definitions

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lead us to define teacher job satisfaction as the affective responses that teachers have to their work or to their role as teachers (Özkan & Akgenç, 2022). Many people realize that employees' effective and efficient work performance determines an organization's overall productivity and success (Green, 2016; Bin & Shmailan, 2015) and that more satisfied employees translate into higher performance (Shahu & Gole, 2008).

Teacher job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are influenced by several factors. According to Von Fischer (2017), there are several factors that affect teachers' job satisfaction. One of the many important components that contribute to a suitable work environment for teachers to be happy in their jobs is the school leadership (Ma'ruf et al., 2020). Yet even if the study rejects the possibility of school principals having any direct influence on students' achievement, leadership directly affects teacher job satisfaction, and this factor also directly affects student achievement (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Simmons, 2020). If school leadership affects teacher satisfaction, retention, and student achievement, it is better for educational organizations to provide attention on effective school leadership (Ronfeldt et al., 2013). Research has confirmed that servant leadership is accepted as a vital and appropriate style in public service delivery organizations and educational settings (Cerit, 2009).

We reviewed a wide range of conceptual and empirical research on servant leadership that was conducted in various countries,

cultures, and organizational settings in the world (e.g., Bambale & Shamsudin, 2015; Cerit, 2009; Liden et al., 2008; McNeff & Irving, 2017; Walumbwa et al., 2010, and others), but the majority has been done in the western context (Lobago & Abraham, 2016; Slack et al., 2020). Similarly, a systematic literature review conducted by Eva et al. (2019), which included 270 published articles and 15 unpublished manuscripts from 1998 to 2018, found that servant leadership is practiced in many cultures worldwide. The study also indicates that the majority of servant leadership research was conducted in Western countries and, to a very limited extent, in the African context. These studies may not explain the reality of Africa because there are differences in culture, civilization, and others.

Eckert and Rweyongoza (2015) emphasize the significance of recognizing cultural variations when examining people's attitudes and actions. They recognized that culture, religion, language, and educational background have an effect on leadership. Numerous studies have shown that it is important to expand the body of knowledge by conducting more empirical research in non-Western nations to confirm the applicability and generalizability (Eva et al., 2019; Langhof & Güldenberg, 2020). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the phenomenon of servant leadership and its influence on job satisfaction in this setting.

In servant leadership, there is also a scarcity of qualitative research; many studies on the area have been quantitative in

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nature (McNeff and Irving, 2017; Winston, 2010). Similar to this, a systematic review conducted by Eva and his colleagues indicates that only a small number of qualitative manuscripts were published in the field within the time interval between 1998 and 2018, and the majority of studies were quantitative. In line with this, further qualitative research is needed to develop a comprehensive understanding of servant leadership (Winston, 2010). Hence, this study was conducted to understand the teachers' and principals' perceptions and lived experiences about principals' servant leadership characteristics and its influence on teachers' job satisfaction in government secondary schools of Hawassa city administration.

Furthermore, there is a shortage of study reports on the characteristics of servant leadership exhibited by leaders and its influence on employee job satisfaction in an Ethiopian context (Alemayehu, 2021). Despite, in the context of Hawassa city administration, the researchers could not find any published or unpublished qualitative research report in the title of the study.

The study seeks to provide valuable insights for school principals aiming to foster an organizational culture that enhances job satisfaction among teachers. Therefore, the study explores the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction. Specifically, the study seeks to address the following research questions:

- How do participants perceive servant leadership characteristics of school principals?
- How do participants perceive the influence of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction?

We believe that this study will assist in filling the gap in the theoretical discussion and practices concerning servant leadership. We also strongly believe that our study will add to servant leadership studies and the wider literature by highlighting the value of it on teachers' job satisfaction.

Method

Research Design

In this study, the phenomenological qualitative research design was employed. Phenomenological research design helps to identify the meaning of people's lived experiences in relation to a specific concept or phenomenon and then constructs a comprehensive description and exploration of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Similarly, the aim of phenomenological study is to capture subjective, "insider" meanings and lived experiences of individuals (Finlay, 2009). It is an effective approach to obtaining in-depth and nuanced insights into the perceptions and experiences of the participants. In this context, this design was used because it helps to explore participants' perception, understanding, and lived experience about their principals' servant leadership characteristics and its influence on teachers' job-satisfaction. Phenomenon for this study is servant leadership characteristics that are exhibited by principals and its influence on teachers' job satisfaction. This design is appropriate for this study because it provides an avenue for participants to describe their

experience about the issue in their own words, expressions and languages.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

The study was conducted in two selected government secondary schools in Hawassa city Administration. The purposive sampling technique was used for selection. Several factors were considered to choose these schools as the study setting. The schools have teachers with a diversified profile (experience, qualification, and age), popularity, and long duration, and students' achievement progress was considered. From these schools, 14 (5 female and 9 male) participant teachers and 4 principals were selected through the purposive sampling technique. Creswell (2012) posits that purposive sampling enables researchers to select the most appropriate and relevant individuals for the study. As a result of this, teachers and principals who have 10 and above years' total experience and who have more than two years' experience at the current school were selected. The reason why we supposed these participants was to have adequate information and experience and then provide the desired information. The main criteria used to select these participants were their experiences and their willingness to participate in the interview. Table 1 depicts the summary of demographic data.

Table1.

Demographic data

No	Participants	Code	Sex	Age	Level of education	Experience at current school	Total experience
1	Teacher 1	T1	Male	54	MSc	5	32
2	Teacher 2	T2	Male	36	BSc	8	10
3	Teacher 3	T3	Female	49	BA	12	28

4	Teacher 4	T4	Male	58	BSc	11	38
5	Teacher 5	T5	Female	48	MA	12	28
6	Teacher 6	T6	Female	57	BA	7	38
7	Teacher 7	T7	Male	32	BSc	6	12
8	Teacher 8	T8	Male	57	MSc	7	34
9	Teacher 9	T9	Female	54	BSc	8	33
10	Teacher 10	T10	Female	57	BA	6	34
11	Teacher 11	T11	Male	35	MSc	8	12
12	Teacher 12	T12	Male	40	MA	5	17
13	Teacher 13	T13	Female	42	BA	4	23
14	Teacher 14	T14	Male	35	BSc	3	15
15	Principal 1	P1	Male	52	MA	7	30
16	Principal 2	P2	Male	41	MA	3	20
17	Principal 3	P3	Male	51	MA	15	32
18	Principal 4	P4	Male	40	MA	6	19

Data Collection

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants (teachers and principals). Because this gives us the opportunity to obtain understanding about participants' experiences, perceptions, and feelings related to the phenomenon. It is also helpful to capture participants' perceptions about principals' servant leadership characteristics and their influence on teachers' job satisfaction through their own words (Creswell, 2012). Semi-structured interviews enabled us to prepare interview questions in advance. This helps the researchers to be well-prepared and competent during the interview. Therefore, the researchers used a set of predetermined open-ended questions to guide a conversation with participants, giving them the opportunity to delve specific themes and response in more detail. Semi-structured interview allows for further questions

when clarification is required (Ruslin et al., 2022). Participants were asked a wide range of questions related to who their servant leader was, what servant leadership characteristics were exhibited by principals, and how these principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction.

The interviews were conducted in person. Interviews with teachers took place in teachers' tea cafeterias and department offices based on the time frames that were arranged; interviews with principals were held in their offices. That was done to minimize distraction. Due to the participants' choice, the interview was conducted in Amharic. Each individual interview lasted approximately 15 up to 40 minutes. All interviews were tape recorded after consent was obtained from respondents.

In addition to this, field notes played critical roles in capturing events, conversations, and behavior observed in the field. It enables the collection of a wide range of information, such as what researchers heard, felt, saw, and thought during the study (Creswell, 2012; Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). The main purpose is to capture nuances and contextual information that might easily forgotten over time and often serve to supplement information gathered from interviews by providing further insights on the observed setting and behavior.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically. In a qualitative study, the data analysis process takes place simultaneously with the data collection process (Strauss and Corbin 1990). After interviews with participants, the first step was the transcription of interviews and interview notes. Secondly, the transcribed interviews were translated from Amharic to

English. To fully understand the meaning of the phenomenon, each transcript was read multiple times. Thirdly, the data coding process was started. After intensive reviews of the transcript, coding data, and comparison of similarity in the responses, the data were classified into four broad themes and seven subthemes.

To ensure accuracy of findings, researchers checked study findings with participants. Asking participants for feedback is the most important technique to establish the credibility of the study findings' (Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2016). Similarly, researchers asked experts outside of the study to conduct a thorough review of the study's report. These experts checked whether the findings were grounded in the data, whether inferences were logical, whether the themes were appropriate, and the degree of researchers' bias also checked. To ensure accuracy and to generate trustworthy results of the study, researchers obtain the support from participants and professionals for different aspects of the study report (Creswell, 2012).

Ethical Issues

Researchers obtained a formal letter of cooperation from Hawassa University, College of Education, and we provided that to 2 sampled schools for data collection permission. The study was approved by the College of Education Ethics Review Committee at Hawassa University under reference number [COE-RECC-10/23]. Moreover, informed consent was obtained from the participants before starting the data collection process, including permission for publication of the results obtained from interview transcripts. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and they were free to leave at any time if they so wished, without giving a reason or facing any negative consequences. Participants were also guaranteed that the information

would be kept confidential and anonymous. To maintain confidentiality during the transcription and analysis of the interview data, each participant was given a numerical identifier as participant T1, T2, T3, up to T14 for teachers and P1, P2, P3, and P4 for principals.

Results

The results of this study were presented based on the following three broad themes and seven subthemes. These broad themes are: who is a servant leader, principals' servant leadership characteristics and practices, and the influences of principals' servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction.

Who is a Servant Leader?

Questions were posed to the participants regarding how they define servant leader. Most of participants defined a servant leader as the one who gives first place for others; the one who supports employee personal and social problems; the one who uses persuasion instead of using coercion; shows humility; a role model; the one who is open, honest, and ethical.

The participants reflected their perception about who is a servant leader for them. T1 and T9 explained that a servant leader is the one who gives first place for the others. Most of the participants' perceptions approach the concepts of a servant leader as the one who provides services for others. The major implication of this is that servant leaders place the good of employees over their own needs.

Also, true servant leaders are satisfied by serving others' needs. Similarly, more than eight participants stated that servant leaders are the ones who provide help and support for the employee's work-

related, personal, and social problems. This implies that teachers need support on the matter of the outside workplace. And this type of leader shows genuine concern to provide support for others.

Another servant leader quality shared by participants was listening. Most participants shared servant leaders, as a leader is the one who listens to personal and social problems and provides support for the others. This insight is supported by T12, *"servant leaders first ask and listen to the concern, need, and idea of employees before taking any action."* The implication of this is that servant leaders show their concern to listen to others idea instead of talking more.

Another participant, T2, shared an idea of servant leadership, saying that a servant leader is one who makes friendly relationships and well approaches with teachers and students. One participant praising a servant leader said, *"A leader is the one who works collaboratively with the employee."* (T3) T7 added, *"A servant leader is different from others because he serves his followers like a servant, he does not act like a boss, and he is responsible for the others."* This implies that servant leaders influence others through persuasion instead of using coercion.

Other participants mentioned extensively about servant leaders' quality as a role model behavior. T3 claimed that servant leaders are more promoted to show appropriate behavior for others rather than commanding. T7 and T14 explained that a servant leader inspires others to follow in their footsteps by showing appropriate behavior that helps society and the organization. Similarly, the participant mentioned his experiences: *"Leaders are role models for teachers and the school community in time management, commitment, and ethical behavior."* (T4) This insight was supported by T6 and T9, as servant leaders

always benchmark characteristics of effective leaders. Similarly, T13 expressed, *"servant leaders impact employee characteristics through their action."* These types of leaders lead others through their behavior and action.

Other participants mentioned widely that servant leaders' quality was ethical behavior. T4 stated that a servant leader is the one who respects others and his/her work. T6 and T13 mentioned that servant leaders fairly distribute any incentive for others. According to T8 and T14, a servant leader is behaving ethically, being open, and showing his/her honesty through his/her action. In addition to this, T2, 8, and 10 perceived that a servant leader is the one who shows humility in his or her characteristics that does not promote him or herself. This implies that servant leaders do not negotiate for their ethical principles to achieve a result.

Another participant shared a memory of his school leader's servant leadership behavior as: *"A servant leader is the one who can formulate long vision and wisely encourage others' involvement."* (T2) T8 also supported, *"A servant leader is the one who is capable of seeing the big picture of the organization beyond daily operation."* T14 also added, "A servant leader is the one who provides large effort for his vision." This implies that servant leaders are visionary, and they align people with their visions.

Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics and Practices
The participants shared their experiences about servant leadership characteristics exhibited by principals. These participants' views are categorized into seven subthemes: conceptualizing, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically.

Conceptualizing

Participants discussed how they and their principals can see beyond the school's immediate surroundings (daily operations) and, while doing so, recognize when something goes wrong ways and find innovative solutions to difficult situations that arise. According to participant T11, he got a leader who constantly assesses the effects of every action that affects an organization's performance, resolves conflicts, and solves problems that arise from actions that undermine the organization's ability to function as a whole. Similarly, the majority of principals who took part in the study mentioned that they had a goal, a vision, and both short- and long-term strategic plans. They discuss their goals and the school's vision with teachers and other stakeholders. As P1 said, they offer creative solutions to the issues that arise in the school.

Emotional Healing

Most of the participants mentioned that the principals understand teachers' problems and well-being. Participant shared what he experienced by saying, *"I obtained very smart principal at the past time in this school, but not now."* (T2) He said that this principal asks and listens to teachers and students' problem friendly. He added that, his principal most of time gives advice and supports to the students rather than solely rushing to take harsh measures. Another participant shared a memory of behavior that was exhibited by his principal: "My principal prioritizes teachers' interests and well-being." (T9) And continued, *"If he sees me coming in late, he asks about the personal issue that caused my lateness, but he never questions why I am late."* He added that his principal gives priority to his well-being. Similarly, T5 appreciated her principal because her principal recognized personal, family, and

work-related problems. Furthermore, T9 also added that his principal asks about his problem and well-being before asking about the work. Another principal characteristic and practice that is extensively mentioned is listening to others. T6 greatly appreciated her leader's effort to listen to her problems and concerns. She said *"I respect my principal because of his approach and support."*. T12 mentioned**,** *"My principal listens equally to both teachers and students to solve problems."* Teachers' overall perception implies that a teacher needs to be listened to, and principals need to support on matters in and outside of the workplace. As P2 said, *"We listen to teachers' personal problems, and we support teachers who are in need of financial help."*

Creating Value for the Community

P2 mentioned that *"when financially struggling students come from the community, we welcome them, support them, and teach them"*. For instance, we buy pens and notebooks for such students. We finance this activity from the school budget, donations from wealthy individuals, staff, and students. Also, he added that they are preparing dorms for students who wish to read at night in the library. P1 stated that for the community, we teach their students, and we deliver them for the results. In addition, he said that they collaborated and worked with the community to change schools. P3 also added that they are involved in the activity that benefits the community. For example, they make their school field available for different groups who wish to play sports out of school hours that benefit them and assist the school to obtain additional financial sources. Another teacher participant concurred with this idea and described her leader's behavior: *"I have met a person who works for the community and inspires others to do the same."* (T10)

Putting Followers First

The principals' servant leadership characteristics that shared by participants was putting followers first. T1 expressed his experiences as follows:

> *"I got principal in another school provides first place for teachers. This principal said, **"I am not the boss for you, I am the facilitator, and I am here to serve you"**. He said for teachers, "you are the main component to improving instruction and the school". This leader mostly scarifies his time to support teachers.*

Their principal pays attention to teachers' issues and offers solutions, as T5 and T7 mentioned. Another female participant talked the opposite, and she described her present school leader's behavior: *"I had no principal at this school in present time who listened intently to my concerns and offered assistance."* (T6) However, before, she got such kinds of principals.

Helping Subordinates Grow and Succeed

Participants also talked about how much they admired their leaders for being sensitive to their personal and professional growth. Participant shared the following insights from his experiences:

> *"The previous principal of my school was an extremely smart person who offered many opportunities to enable the teachers to reach their maximum potential. Through field trips, training, and the creation of an environment that supports staff self-learning, this principal encourages teachers to grow in their careers and fosters learning. Now our school is model, and only a few teachers can count as BA/BSC holders. This result comes from the past principal's effort."* (T2)

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T12 also stated, "*My previous principal committed to improve teachers' potential in different ways, such as staff self-training and field trips.*" In contrast to this, after that principal, he did not get such kind of principals in this school. T3 and T4 reported that their present school principals express gratitude for their outstanding work. P3 further stated, **"***Through CPD and other long- and short-term training, we support and foster an environment where teachers may advance their careers***"**. This suggests that mentorship and fostering an environment that is conducive to teachers' professional development are the responsibilities of leaders.

Empowering

The principal also exhibited another characteristic of a servant: empowering teachers. In relation to this, the participant shared his principal's behavior in following ways:

> *"Before I transferred to this school, I got a principal that shared full responsibilities for the teachers and vision for entire groups, and that created a potential impact on students'. This principal shows trust in others. Allows teachers to be independent, make decisions on their own work, and be confident in their potential."* (T1)

In a similar vein, T7 and T10 appreciate their principals for assigning work that comes with complete responsibility. T2 further stated that he had a principal at his former school who shared complete responsibility and had trust in the abilities of others. Such leaders become more successful because the achievement of one school is the result of all school communities.

Behaving Ethically

Another servant characteristics practiced by principal was behaving ethically. T5 responded, *"In my long experience, I have encountered some really approachable principals who interact honestly, treat teachers fairly, and encourage open communication."* T4 also shared his experiences, *"My previous principal treats all teachers equally." "I don't have a principal like that in this school right now."* (T4) Another participant also added that, through her experiences, he got ethical school leaders in this school and other schools. (T6) These principals were not fault finders. T7 and T9 reported that they obtained some principals at their schools that behave ethically. These principals treat teachers fairly, interact openly with teachers, and responsible for others. On the other hand, the participant described the challenges he has faced as follows: *"I have a principal who does not treat teachers equally for incentives."* (T14) This implies that when the leader works with an employee in an organization, he/she is expected to show open behavior, transparency, honesty, treat people equally, and be accountable for others.

The Influence of Principals' Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

Most of participants shared how principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction. Participants have mentioned that servant leadership characteristics exhibited by principals' play a significant role in teachers' job satisfaction. The teacher participants shared that the principal's servant leadership characteristics influenced their job satisfaction in different ways.

Teachers felt satisfied when their principals created good relationships and approached them through providing support for their problems.

(T3,5,6,7 & 9). These teachers were also satisfied at their job because of the friendly support and relationship with their principals. Another participant agreed with this notion and shared this idea as follows: *"When principals show supportive behavior that encourage teachers to enjoy their job and satisfied teachers also encourage taking additional task and responsibility."* (T11). The perceptions of these teachers indicated that principals' supportive behavior and good relationship with teachers can create great impact on teachers' job satisfaction.

Participants valued leaders who are sensitive to their feelings and concerns. T9 shared that when principals give attention to personal concerns and ask about her problems and well-being before asking about the work, that greatly impacts her job satisfaction. She added that, in contrast to that when principal follows weak approach like boss-oriented and fault-finding approaches that create dissatisfaction. Another participant praises her principal effort: *"My previous principal asked about my personal problem that creates a large impact on my job."* (T6) These teachers were satisfied because their principals support them in solving their problems.

T2 shares about his previous principal characteristics: *"My previous principal contributed to teachers' professional development by providing training opportunities and creating suitable environments that encourage teachers to realize their dreams."* Similarly, another participant appreciated the principal effort: *"My principal committed to improving teachers' potential in different ways like field trips and staff self-training that creates a large impact on the teachers' job satisfaction."* (T12) T4 appreciated how his school principal encouraged his performance and professional development, and this helped him to be satisfied with his job. In this case principals are responsible to contribute to teachers' professional

development and performances with. In contrast to this, another participant shared his principals' behavior in following ways:

> *"I experienced extremely terrible leadership in my first school—the exact opposite of servant leadership, which led me up to leave my profession. Following transfer to a new school, I have got another good supportive leadership and principal that helped me to change my attitude and helped me to continue my profession through his encouragement." (T10)*

T1 mentioned that his previous principal provided autonomy and full responsibility to the teachers to decide for their work independently without interferences that create job happiness. Similarly, T7 shared that his principal delegates responsibilities and shares power. T10 commented: *"My principal delegates tasks based on teachers' capacity these create impact on their satisfaction"*. These perceptions indicated that, teachers are satisfied if their principals provided them with independence and full responsibilities without interference.

Other principals' characteristics that create impact on teachers' job satisfaction are ethical and honesty characteristics. T5 mentioned that her previous principal distributed incentive for the teachers that created good feeling on her work. Similarly, T13 states, *"I feel satisfied when the principal treats me fairly and equally with other teachers based on our performance."* T9 also mentioned what she experienced: *"I feel satisfied when my school principal shows real well- approach, agreeableness, and open communication."* These perceptions indicated that when principals show agreeableness, honesty behavior, ethical, genuine and true feeling for others, it creates internal happiness among teachers. On the other hand, *"I got a principal who treats teachers unfairly, and these*

principal forms an informal group that supports him, gives for these teachers unfair support, and unfairly holds my incentives that creates a negative impact on my job." (T14).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction. The participants conceptualized servant leadership by indicating characteristics that exhibited by principals and principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction. These are discussed below.

Who is a servant leader?

Participants were asked in first interview question to share their perception about who a servant leader for them is. They define servant leader as the one who gives first place for the others and serve others need. The finding highlights servant leaders as the ones who provide services for others they led. Similar to this finding, the main motive and role of servant leaders is to serve others (Greenleaf, 1970, as cited in Olesia et al., 2014). Reed, et al. (2011) confirmed that servant leaders build people through providing services, genuinely putting people in first place, listening to and respecting others.

Moreover, participants perceived that, servant leader promote provide help, sensitive for others well-being, and listen teachers' idea, concern, and problems. In similar to this, Yukl, (2010) found out servant leader servant leader provides values and develops people through listening, empowering and showing his commitment for the growth of employee.

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The current study revealed that servant leaders foster ethical characteristics through interacting honestly, treating all fairly, encouraging open communication, and respecting others. Similar to these, Liden et al., (2008) confirmed as servant leaders behave ethical that contain interacting willingly, openly, fairly, responsibly and honestly with others in the organization and even the society at large.

Principals' Servant Leadership Characteristics and Practices
Participants in this study shared servant leadership characteristics exhibited by the principals. These characteristics are providing value for the people through respecting others, asking and listening to teachers' concerns first, and showing appreciation for good performances. Similar to this, Laub (1999) found out that leaders work with people in organizations through giving priority for others, listening, respecting others, show love and compassion towards others and believing in them.

One of the findings from this study is that school leaders have conceptual skills that help them see beyond immediate surroundings (day-to-day operations). Similar to this finding, servant leaders are able to view the organization beyond its limits, adjust goals, and find innovative answers to the organization's complicated difficulties (Liden et al. 2008). To achieve the goals and objectives of both individuals and organizations', servant leaders need to possess wide conceptual skills.

The current study revealed that principals work to develop teachers through creating training opportunities, encouraging teachers to upgrade their profession, creating a suitable environment for learning, and facilitating necessary resources such as internet access and

teaching and learning materials. In line with this finding, Laub (1999) confirmed that servant leader develop people through providing opportunities for learning and growth. Again, Liden et al. (2008) and Stone et al. (2004) found that servant leaders show genuine concern for others' and provide support and mentoring for their career growth and development.

This study found that principals empower teachers, share and delegate tasks with full responsibility and believe on others ability. Similar to this, servant leaders pay more attention to employee development and well-being, as well as share their power to make decisions on the job (Hai & Van, 2021). Servant leaders give to subordinates the freedom to identify problems and make decisions during problems-solving activities (Liden et al., 2008).

The Influence of Principals' Leadership Characteristics on Teachers' Job Satisfaction

The findings of this study revealed that principals' servant leadership characteristics have significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction. Different studies (e.g. Cerit, 2009; VonFischer, 2017; Wong, 2019) also confirmed that principals' servant leadership characteristics influence the teachers' job satisfaction. Teacher participants perceived that they felt satisfied when their principal provided value for them through providing time to listen to them, being sensitive to their concerns, and asking about personal and work-related problems. Similarly, Cerit (2009) confirmed that servant leadership characteristics (providing value for the people) are strongly related with teachers' job satisfaction.

The findings of this study revealed that participants felt satisfied when their principals contributed for their effort to professional

development through providing different training opportunities, encouraging teachers to upgrade on their profession, and creating a suitable environment for learning. Similar to this result, Cerit (2009) found out school principals' effort to contribute to teachers' professional development had essential effects on teachers' job satisfaction. According to Wong (2019), professional development resources and training are the means as to improve employee practices.

Participants felt satisfied when their principal provided autonomy and delegated full responsibility to the teachers to decide for their work independently. Many studies findings show that enhancing employee autonomy and empowerment positively affects workers' job satisfaction. These studies indicated that empowered teachers are more likely to take pride in their work, which greatly enhances job satisfaction (Bogler & Nir, 2012; Dilekci, 2022).

The findings of this study demonstrated that a principal's ethical and honesty behavior can affect teachers' satisfaction with their jobs. A study by Cansoy, Parlar, and Türkoğlu (2021) found a positive correlation between teachers' job satisfaction and the ethical leadership characteristics of principals. Participants felt satisfied because their principals displayed authenticity characteristics like open communication, agreeable and well-approach. Different studies (eg. Hebert, 2004; Hui, et al., 2013) confirmed that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by suitable school environment, principals' support for teachers' question, open communication and respect from principals to teachers.

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Conclusion

Research participants expressed their perceptions about who is a servant leader. Regarding to this, the servant leader is perceived as the one who give first place for others, serve others need, listen and support others personal and social problem, show humility, role model, honesty and ethical leader.

This study identified servant leadership characteristics that exhibited by secondary school principals. These characteristics are conceptualizing, emotional healing, creating value for the community, putting followers first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically.

The result of the study also revealed that teacher participants felt satisfied if their principals exhibited characteristics of providing value for people, contributing to their professional development, building community, displaying authenticity and sharing power and responsibilities. It was concluded that principals' servant leadership characteristics have significant effect on teachers' job satisfaction.

Theoretical and Practical Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several theoretical implications. The servant leadership theoretical model, which was developed by Liden et al. (2008), is empirically supported by this study. This model aims to elucidate how leaders impact their immediate followers' job outcomes, including commitment, satisfaction, and performance. Our study corroborates this theoretical perspective, demonstrating how servant leadership characteristics can influence teachers' job satisfaction. In addition to this, previous research in other contexts shows that there is

a positive relationship between servant leadership and teachers' job satisfaction (Cerit, 2009; VonFischer, 2017; Wong, 2019). There is scarcity or little known about principals' servant leadership characteristics influence on teachers' job satisfaction in the Ethiopian context. The present study provided theoretical knowledge about the influence of principals' servant leadership on teachers' job satisfaction, filling research gaps.

The findings of this study demonstrate that principals who exhibit servant leadership characteristics contributed to enhancing teachers' job satisfaction. These findings also provide practical guidance for schools and other educational organizations to cultivate a servant leadership culture, create favorable environments, and ultimately bolster employee well-being and satisfaction. In the same way, studies indicate that satisfied teachers provide their pupils with better instruction and learning assistance (Kunter et al., 2013), which can increase student performance (Nguni et al., 2006). Teachers' satisfaction is influenced by the following factors: achievement, advancement, recognition, salary, working environment, policies and practices, and job security (Dugguh & Dennis, 2014; Ozguner & Ozguner, 2014). Similarly, we strongly believe that our study gives constructive feedback for government and policymakers regarding teachers' job satisfaction to improve teachers' life status through better pay, work conditions, recognition, and advancement in the global and Ethiopian context.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions reached, the following possible recommendations are forwarded to increase the teachers' job satisfaction. According to Lamaro and Okello (2024), effective work of

teachers resulted from improved job satisfaction. Therefore, school principals should make an effort to contribute to teachers' job satisfaction through putting first place for teachers' needs, listening and helping teachers' problems, paying attention to their concerns, creating a suitable environment for learning and professional development, building friendly relationships with teachers, developing trust on teachers, empowering and sharing power for teachers, and displaying ethical behavior. School principals should be aware and practices all servant leadership characteristics and should pay special attention to the emotional healing, putting followers' first, helping subordinates grow and succeed, empowering, and behaving ethically to improve teachers' job satisfaction. At the end, this study's findings provided indications regarding how servant leadership impacts teachers' job satisfaction. Therefore, it is recommended that universities develop curricula that would equip school administrators with the abilities and knowledge regarding the theory and application of servant leadership.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study has certain limitations that need to be considered in future research. This study was limited to two government secondary schools and small sample sizes. It is challenging to generalize the findings of this study to a larger setting. Finally, the researchers would like to suggest the following areas for additional study for anyone looking to expand or enhance the work.

- Although the dynamics of teachers' job satisfaction may vary across different educational levels due to variations in teachers' duties, payment, working environment, growth, interpersonal relationships, and students' age, this study only looked at secondary schools. Thus, it would be wise to investigate if the

characteristics of servant leadership are as helpful in fostering work satisfaction in elementary, middle, and high schools.

- An analysis that compares private and public schools might shed light on whether servant leadership techniques work better in one setting than the other. It is necessary to conduct comparative study on servant leadership practice and its effect on employee job satisfaction in two or more public and/or private and/or service-oriented organizations.

- The future research should, include other schools from Hawassa City Administration and other regions to give insight into this study's validity.

- It is necessary to conduct longitudinal studies to examine the impact of servant leadership characteristics on teachers' job satisfaction in Ethiopian context.

- It is necessary for future study if it could investigate influences of servant leadership characteristics on students' achievement in Ethiopian context.

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The Role of Leadership in Academic Culture in Diverse Scientific Communities: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract	Article Info

This systematic review explores effective leadership mechanisms for managing cultural diversity in universities, aiming to identify key practices that foster a positive and inclusive academic environment. A systematic review methodology was used to search electronic databases and Google Scholar, resulting in the inclusion of 22 studies published between 1979 and 2020. A meta-synthesis revealed a comprehensive framework with four dimensions and 32 mechanisms: 1. Pre-organizational: Focuses on the leader's background influencing their approach to diversity. 2. Operational: Explores leadership practices and strategies for managing cultural diversity. 3. Output: Examines the tangible outcomes of effective leadership in creating a positive cultural environment. 4. Feedback: Emphasizes the importance of feedback mechanisms for refining leadership practices.
This review contributes to existing research by proposing a holistic framework for effective leadership in culturally diverse universities, encompassing all stages of leadership effectiveness.

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Introduction

Social culture plays a crucial role in shaping the behaviors, values, and beliefs of societies. This cultural backdrop directly influences organizational culture, causing organizations—particularly in the business sector—to operate in alignment with the needs and expectations of society. For instance, in collectivist cultures, organizations place greater emphasis on teamwork and social harmony, while individualistic cultures focus more on individual achievements and competition (Ayega, 2018). Consequently, organizations can act as agents of cultural change, promoting initiatives such as innovation and social responsibility, which in turn can alter societal attitudes over time.

Universities serve as a prominent example of organizations that respond to these social influences. As complex social entities with their own distinct cultures, universities must navigate changing environmental conditions while striving to maintain academic freedom and organizational autonomy (Sporn, 1996). The societal culture in which a university is embedded plays a vital role in shaping its institutional environment and governance practices (Daniel et al., 2011). While universities work to adapt to global influences, they also need to address issues of cultural diversity, inclusion, and equity

within their educational and managerial frameworks (Dimmock & Walker, 2000).

In this context, academic culture becomes a critical factor influencing scientific development within society. It is recognized that there is a significant relationship between the characteristics of academic culture and the rate of academic growth and scientific production (Fazeli, 2008). In the 21st century, environmental and global changes pose new challenges for the culture of higher education. Universities need to reconstruct their desired academic culture to effectively respond to these challenges and cope with the phenomenon of environmental change (Safaei Fakhri & Behrangi, 2009). These challenges are not limited to organizational structures but can also manifest within various academic subgroups or processes. For example, in human resource management, universities must achieve coordination and integration of their organizational units to gain a competitive advantage akin to that of multinational organizations (Dowling et al., 2013). International interactions have confronted the human resource management of universities with cultural diversity, for instance with respect to the differences in the international employees' views on monochronic (working in a linear fashion, focusing on one task at a time such as completing a project before starting a new one) or polychronic (juggling multiple tasks at once and valuing relationships over strict schedules, like attending to several conversations or projects simultaneously) schedules on work and leisure, the desire for direct or indirect communication, the desire for individualism or collectivism, and performance evaluation based on each culture (Ramanan, 2015).

A deep understanding of academic culture can enhance the quality of education and services for students and society, promote global educational and research activities, and provide high-standard

academic services (Azis & Abduh, 2019). Also, studies indicate that there is a significant and positive relationship between different types of academic culture and reducing students' alienation (Beyrami et al., 2014), reducing job burnout, increasing employees' job satisfaction (Zamini et al., 2010), and increasing the university's soft power (Yongyou, 2014). Conversely, weaknesses in academic culture can negatively affect university performance, diminish credibility, and reduce scientific dynamism (Yamani Dozi Sorkhabi, 2003). Thus, recognizing the interplay between organizational and academic cultures—and their mutual influences—can pave the way for development and advancement in the realm of higher education and science.

Forming a favorable academic culture needs organizational leaders to identify that culture is a complex subject, and at the same time have the motivation and skills to change cultural processes, determine ineffective values and assumptions, and then introduce and implement new concepts, values and assumptions (Bystydzienski et al., 2016). A rich body of research showed a positive and considerable effect of leadership style on the culture of the organization/school/university (Iqbal, 2004; Hosseini Sarkhosh, 2010; Karaminia et al., 2010; Ali Panah et al., 2014; Ali et al., 2015; Purwana, 2015; Karadag et al., 2020; Özgenel & Ankaralioglu, 2020).

Such a relationship between culture and leadership has long been regarded by scholars in the way proposed by Schein (1985, p. 25) recognizing the unique talent of leaders in managing culture and their ability to work with it. Leaders play a key and influential role in the development of academic culture (Baker, 1992, p.10). Studies have often stressed the role of leadership as a fundamental factor in shaping the culture of the organization (Metwally, et al., 2019). But to play such

a role better, understanding the culture and how to popularize it is a vital skill for those attempting to achieve strategic results in managing their organization (Belias & Koustelios, 2014). This skill, what is referred to in this study as "mechanisms," is also critical to advance the purposes of academic culture in universities. These mechanisms and how they are formed by leaders have been less examined in the literature (Huang, et al., 2005). Therefore, little is known about how school leaders can shape the school culture (Haiyan et al., 2017) or academic culture (Marzooghi et al., 2019).

Given the significance of this issue, this research explored leadership mechanisms in forming academic culture. To do this, we recognized that academic culture is often referred to as "organizational culture" in the literature, and we need to explore how leadership influences this dynamic in different organizations. After extracting the suggested leadership mechanisms, they can be applied based on the needs and conditions of each university. Thus, the objective of this research is to get a clear sight of the research into leadership mechanisms to shape culture for application in higher education. Therefore, the question that this research seeks to answer is: "through which mechanisms can academic leadership shape academic culture?"

The results of this literature research can open the way for researchers to develop existing knowledge in the field of academic culture. In addition, the findings can be used as a framework for the action of leaders at the university level to create or replace an academic culture based on desired values in universities.

Literature review

Academic culture in Higher Education

Academic culture is a combination of the initial definitions of "culture" and "organizational culture." In these definitions, "culture" is described as constant and fundamental social meanings that shape beliefs and behaviors over time (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 7). On the other hand, "organizational culture" encompasses beliefs, values, assumptions, and performances that create a unique social and psychological environment within an organization (Viinikainen et al., 2019). If such constant and fundamental meanings and assumptions realize their way into academic interactions and associations, and academics, administrators, and students share them and will consider them as the basis for action and require certain standards of behavior, "academic culture" will be formed (Nayak & Venkatraman, 2010; Shen & Tian, 2012; Yongyou, 2014). To put it more simply, academic culture refers to the common beliefs, attitudes, values, meanings, assumptions, experiences, symbols, norms, and behaviors among university members, whether they are studying or working (Brick, 2020).

The primary elements within academic culture are beliefs and values. Beliefs play a crucial role in shaping how individuals perceive and interact with the world (Deal & Peterson, 1999, p. 26). They become the foundation of knowledge over time. Values, on the other hand, serve as standards of goodness, quality, or excellence. They influence behavior and decision-making (Ott, 1989). Within Parson's "cultural system" framework, the expression of both values and beliefs occurs through a complex interplay between these elements. Values, broad ideals and goals that guide behavior, find expression through their articulation and embodiment within the cultural system. They influence the formation of norms, providing the underlying rationale

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for rules and expected conduct. Also, beliefs, representing specific understandings and assumptions about the world, are closely intertwined with values but often remain implicit. They influence how individuals interpret cultural norms and symbols, shaping their actions and decisions within the broader cultural context. The interplay between values and beliefs occurs in various ways: (1) Symbolically: Cultural meanings are conveyed through rituals, art, music, and language, reinforcing shared ideals; (2) Institutionally: Social structures, laws, and organizations reflect and uphold cultural values and norms; (3) Individually: Personal choices, behaviors, and interpretations of cultural symbols demonstrate internalized values and beliefs. Understanding this dynamic interplay provides valuable insights into cultural functioning and change (Parsons, 1937, pp. 70-75, pp. 441-443; Parsons, 1951, pp. 59-65; Parsons, 1966, pp. 50-55).

It cannot be ignored that the value system of individuals is obtained from the *meanings* and *assumptions* of the mind and also their special academic *experiences* that have been achieved through various means such as teaching, learning, research, interaction, and relationships with students, professors, and personnel in the university environment (Olutokunbo et al., 2013). Ultimately, the subjects that have previously been identified as beliefs, values, meanings, assumptions, and experiences as elements of academic culture have demonstrated themselves in other elements of academic culture, such as *symbols* that are possible to be applied as common semantic contracts (Edgar & Sedgwick, 2008), pleasant or unpleasant *attitudes* and also the *norms* established in the form of orders, prohibitions, preferences, and permissions (Niazi et al., 2016). So, the entirety of culture is not only dependent on its elements but also how they interact and form a cohesive unit (Hammal & Vadi, 2006, p. 89).

The formation of academic culture within a university is influenced not only by cultural elements and their interactions but also by each individual member. Each university member brings diverse cultural elements (such as beliefs, values, and attitudes) that are either strengthened or forgotten during their time at the institution (Shen & Tian, 2012). Additionally, academic members form various groups based on their cultural preferences, and these groups constantly interact. As an educational unit, a university serves as a foundation for multiple relationships, including internal connections among managers, personnel, and students, as well as external relationships with graduates, future students, parents, and employers. Faculty members play a crucial role in shaping cultural dynamics beyond teaching scientific concepts. Their viewpoints, attitudes, evaluations, and actions significantly impact students' culture. Research demonstrates that professors' beliefs and behaviors significantly shape students' experiences and perceptions in academic settings, with cultural factors influencing faculty perspectives that in turn affect student motivation, sense of belonging, and academic interest (Lacosse et al., 2021; Muenks et al., 2021; Zhang & He, 2024), highlighting the critical need for faculty training in cultural diversity and inclusive practices (Chamberlain, 2005). Meanwhile, students adhere to specific values and norms, which they propagate as a social group. Effective team leaders or managers can leverage this cultural diversity to achieve productivity by ensuring a positive aspect of this rich academic culture (Deep et al., 2017).

Identifying more specifically the elements and actors of academic culture, each with their own unique features, enables us to understand the complexity of the concept of culture. Furthermore, the world being "a global village", no university is assigned to a specific nationality in

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today's society. The impact of internationalization on academic culture is multifaceted. This shift has led to a focus on quantitative indicators such as international student recruitment and outbound student mobility to demonstrate an institution's 'international' status (Robson et al., 2017). It has created new challenges for faculty members, including the need to adapt teaching methods for diverse student populations and engage in international research collaborations (Bedenlier & Zawacki-Richter, 2015). Moving forward, institutions may need to create clearer frameworks that encompass factors such as language and learning skills, educational systems, and faculty development to improve learning sustainability among international students and foster a truly internationalized academic culture (Yassin et al., 2020). Indeed, universities have been gathered together to form an academic society, with a variety of nationalities, cultures, languages, races, genders etc. Combining this cultural diversity of the academic communities (Baker, 1992, p.10) with the individual features of each academic actor, and with different elements of culture that are different and specific in each individual society and university, creates a highly diverse and multicultural scientific community, and also adds to the complexity of the concept of academic culture.

Accordingly, insight into these complex and diverse relationships (that basically refer to cultural elements of diversity) is required to study the culture of the university. Cultural diversity yields two basics issues for the university leader. Firstly, the leader, as a person who is directly related to the elements of culture in the university, must have a proper understanding of what and how each element is. Secondly, it should be known that culture cannot be formed by itself or by a specific person or group. So, the interaction of all members and subcultures is

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necessary to understand and internalize cultural commonalities. Achieving both of these issues requires the effective involvement of academic leaders.

Leadership in Higher Education

Up until the 1990s, most universities operated in a relatively stable environment where faculty members made decisions primarily focused on research and teaching rather than strong management skills. This collegial approach reflected Mintzberg's (1979, 1983) perspective of universities as stable institutions with minimal coordination between departments, concentrating on academic pursuits.

However, the landscape underwent significant transformation due to rapid globalization and technological advancements, ultimately giving rise to a new "knowledge economy" (Gregory, 1996). As a result, universities faced increasing pressure to adapt and produce graduates equipped to compete in this evolving reality. Governments also required universities to contribute to the development of "human capital" (Gregory, 1996). In other words, governments, viewing universities as key engines of economic growth, increasingly emphasized their role in developing a skilled workforce. This perspective framed students as investments in "human capital," leading to greater scrutiny of curriculum relevance and graduate employability. Consequently, universities had to adapt their educational approaches to meet the demands of the job market. These external pressures revealed the shortcomings of the traditional academic model. According to Davies et al. (2001), conventional academic governance struggled to keep up with the shifting demands of this new environment.

This transformation led to the emergence of university leadership as a response to the complexities of modern education. Effective leaders were needed to balance the age-old academic freedoms with the necessity of responding to external demands, such as securing funding in a competitive landscape. Kuiper (2005) identified two critical cultural aspects within universities: the academic culture, which focuses on research and teaching, and the managerial culture, which emphasizes efficiency and operations. Leaders now found themselves navigating both cultures.

Management is about creating frameworks for efficient operations, while leadership is about inspiring action and achieving shared goals in teaching and learning (Parrish, 2011). Thus, university leaders must act as stewards of academic freedom while also championing the overall success of their institutions.

Leadership in this context is multifaceted. Ramsden (1998) describes it as the daily practice of supporting, motivating, and guiding colleagues (cited in Parrish, 2011). Middlehurst (1993) adds that effective leadership involves taking responsibility, setting direction, and influencing outcomes. Toker (2022) provides a broader view, detailing various leadership roles within universities that encompass teaching, research, strategic vision, collaboration, and promoting fairness and recognition.

Academic leader for academic culture

Universities are vibrant hubs of intellectual exchange, where students from diverse backgrounds come together to learn and grow. This rich tapestry thrives not just on the inclusion of different cultures, but on a deeper commitment to cultural integrity. This means fostering a space where individual identities are celebrated alongside a shared sense of

purpose and community (Vasquez & Nguyen, 2023). Martin (2012) offers a helpful framework for understanding the delicate dance between unity and diversity within universities. The first perspective, integration, envisions a university as a chorus singing in perfect harmony. This idealized image, however, overlooks the unique rhythms and voices that different cultures bring to the table. A more realistic approach lies in differentiation, acknowledging the existence of diverse subcultures within the university. These subcultures may coexist peacefully, or they may experience friction due to underlying power dynamics. Recognizing these dynamics allows for more nuanced leadership strategies. Finally, the concept of fragmentation suggests a university where everyone plays their own unique note, creating a beautiful but complex soundscape. This perspective highlights the vast array of perspectives that enrich university life, but also underscores the need for bridges and common ground (Mumby, 1994).

Universities that prioritize cultural integrity experience considerable advantages. Research by Vasquez and Nguyen (2023) and Perez and Gonzales (2019) clearly indicates that students from diverse backgrounds excel in environments that not only provide inclusive programming but also demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences and foster a strong sense of belonging. Additionally, these supportive environments contribute significantly to greater academic readiness (Kolluri & Tierney, 2019) and, as a result, ultimately lead to higher academic success (Perez & Gonzales, 2019; Vasquez & Nguyen, 2023). This connection highlights the importance of cultural integrity in enhancing overall educational outcomes for all students.

Furthermore, celebrating differences, rather than striving for homogenization, fuels innovation, critical thinking, and a vibrant

exchange of ideas (Moffitt & Barton, 2020). However, achieving cultural integrity is an ongoing challenge. Universities must avoid falling into the trap of fragmentation, where a lack of shared values leads to disconnection and conflict (Martin, 2012). Studies that support this viewpoint stress several dynamics that demonstrate how a novel strategy might develop within integration and differentiation (Moore, 2021; Muhr et al., 2022). According to this perspective, organizational culture is never totally stable or flexible, but is instead recreated via disputes among its members' subcultural viewpoints from the inside. Therefore, by interventions such as nuancing cultural stereotypes and strengthening hybrid positions, experts and researchers can jointly examine the dynamics of culture to find alternatives to stereotypes that are frequently defined by multiple subcultures as barriers to organizational integration (Muhr et al., 2022).

Here, effective leadership plays a crucial role. Leaders can bridge divides by fostering open communication and collaborative learning initiatives (Moffitt & Barton, 2020). Additionally, leadership styles (like transformational leaders) beyond traditional models significantly impact university culture. They can foresee the future and develop an ideal image of the organization by setting up future goals. Leaders set goals, creating a shared vision that unites faculty, staff, and students (Zulfaqar et al., 2021). Achieving this vision requires teamwork and collaboration, fostering a sense of community (Siswanto et al., 2023). With this definition, it seems that unless the members of the university cooperate in the form of a working team, the university goals will not be achieved. Also, the formation of cooperative teams is contingent upon a shared objective among members that goes beyond individual goals. This shared goal should unite members in valuing and interacting with each other, while still respecting differences in beliefs,

ideas, perspectives, and identities (Astin & Astin, 2000). Therefore, it can be said that a common goal will also strengthen some common cultural concepts. Such common concepts of culture in the university can be considered as a system of common cognitions, knowledges and beliefs (Abidin, 2014).

However, cultural integrity goes beyond simply following rules. It requires continuous reflection and a commitment to ethical practices. Transparency, fairness, and open communication create an environment where diverse perspectives can flourish (Solomon et al., 2021). This fosters a sense of shared values and goals across the university (Cooper, 2015). Effective leadership is crucial for achieving this cultural harmony. Studies consistently show a strong link between leadership style and positive university culture (Iqbal, 2004; Hosseini Sarkhosh, 2010; Karaminia et al., 2010; Tsai, 2011; Ali Panah et al., 2014; Birhanu, 2021; Jose & Seema, 2021). Leaders play a vital role in shaping a culture that prioritizes collaboration, critical thinking, and ethical conduct.

While it is important to prioritize leadership style and the establishment of a dominant academic culture in alignment with university goals, the leader's operational mechanisms play a crucial role in translating their unique concepts into action. This is particularly challenging in an educational institution like a university, which is characterized by diverse and complex elements, components, and audiences (Chen, 2017).

Considering this issue, the goal of this study is identifying leadership mechanisms to shape academic culture. This is a question that has received less attention in research related to the relationship between leadership and culture. A comprehensive understanding of these mechanisms will equip academic leaders with the necessary insights

to cultivate environments that not only encourage innovation and collaboration among faculty and students but also enhance overall institutional effectiveness. Furthermore, such environments are essential for driving societal impact, as they foster the development of critical thinking, creativity, and civic engagement among students, ultimately contributing to the betterment of society as a whole. By shedding light on how leadership practices can actively shape academic culture, this research encourages a more strategic approach to leadership in higher education, highlighting the importance of intentional cultural development in achieving positive educational outcomes.

Methodology

Selecting review papers

Considering the research issue, our questioning approach is a kind of "What" and consequently, the research question is: "*What* are the leadership mechanisms to shape the academic culture?"

To identify relevant studies on leadership mechanisms for cultural development in universities, we conducted a systematic search in October 2023 across eight electronic databases such as Google scholar- Scopus- ScienceDirect- Springer- Pro-Quest and Iran's scientific database, databases of Jihad University Scientific Information Center and Comprehensive Humanities Portal. Our initial search strategy utilized a broad range of keywords to capture diverse perspectives on leadership and culture formation:

- *Leadership and Culture Formation:* "Designing culture & Leadership", "Shaping culture & Leadership", "Developing culture & Leadership", "Cultural formation & Leadership",

"Creating culture & Leadership", "Building culture & Leadership", "Leadership mechanisms", "Cultural leadership",

- *Leadership in Educational Settings:* "Leadership & Academic culture"

- *Focus on Universities:* "University", "Higher education"

The selection criteria for this meta-synthesis prioritized qualitative studies that explored leadership mechanisms in shaping organizational culture. Due to the limited number of studies specifically focusing on universities or higher education institutions, the search was broadened to include other relevant contexts such as schools, organizations, and companies. Eligible study types encompassed a range of scholarly outputs, including journal articles, books, dissertations, and reports.

Based on these keywords, we refined our search string using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) to ensure comprehensive yet focused retrieval: (Shape* OR Develop* OR Form* OR Create*) AND ("organizational culture" OR "academic culture") AND (Leader* NOT "Cultural Leadership") AND (University OR "Higher education") AND (Mechanism* OR process OR States*). The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Re-views and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) group, which mainly consists of a four-phase flow diagram, was used. The flow diagram describes the identification, screening, eligibility and inclusion criteria of the reports that fall under the scope of a review (Figure 1).

Identification

| Record identified through database searching n = 73 | Additional record identified through other sources n = 123 |

Screening

Records screened after duplicates removes
n = 181

Records excluded
n = 146

Eligibility

Full-text articles assessed for eligibility
n = 35

Full-text articles excluded with 2 reasons:
Quantitative focus (n = 9)
Not new (n = 4)

Included

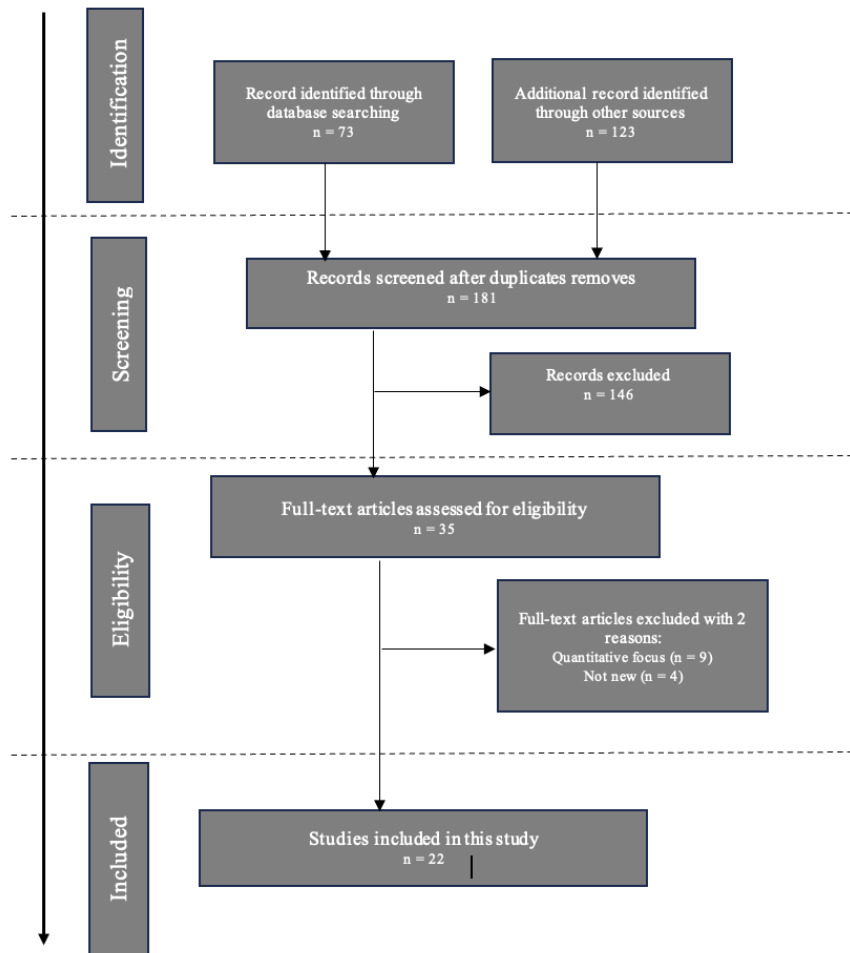Studies included in this study
n = 22

Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram

About 73 results from keywords search, and 123 results (among about 2,180 Google Scholar results) with search string technique were

identified. The first relevant research in this topic was found in 1982 and the most recent one in 2020[1] (see Table 1).

Table 1.

Number and type of studies resulting from keyword search

	Keyword	Number of studies in terms of the type			
		Book	**Thesis**	**Article**	**Other**
1	Creating culture & Leadership	1	6	8	5
2	Shaping culture & Leadership	7	6	14	2
3	Building culture & Leadership	1	-	-	4
4	Developing culture & Leadership	-	-	1	1
5	Cultural formation & Leadership	-	2	3	-
6	Designing culture & Leadership	1	-	-	-
7	Leadership mechanisms	-	1	7	-
8	Cultural leadership	-	-	2	1
9	leadership & Academic culture	-	-	-	-

Following the initial search, we implemented a two-step screening process to identify the most relevant studies for qualitative analysis:

1. Initial Screening (Title and Abstract):

Studies were excluded if:

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[1] . No research on this topic (leadership mechanisms for culture) was found prior to 1982 and after 2020.

- They lacked a clear connection to the research topic (leadership mechanisms for cultural development). Actually, while these articles may have included relevant keywords in their titles, the actual content did not provide a thorough exploration of the specific mechanisms of leadership that directly influence any types of culture.

- They focused solely on quantitative analysis of the leader-culture relationship, not the mechanisms themselves.

2. Full-Text Review:

Following the initial screening, full-text articles were retrieved and assessed for inclusion based on the following criteria:

- Qualitative Focus: The study employed qualitative methods to explore and describe leadership mechanisms for cultural development.

- Novelty: The study introduced new insights or classifications of leadership mechanisms beyond simply replicating existing research. This contrasts with some studies that merely restated leadership mechanisms previously mentioned in earlier works. For example, the classification proposed by Schein (2004) was often referenced without a deeper examination of its application in contemporary contexts.

This two-step screening process ensured that the included studies provided rich qualitative data on leadership mechanisms for shaping culture. Finally, 22 studies were considered as the most relevant studies in the field of research according to the searched keywords or search strings and studying their text.

Analyzing the selected studies by meta-synthesis method

Identifying and extracting 22 studies obtained enables us to refer these studies to the next stages of the meta-synthesis method to analyze the data and collect the mechanisms mentioned in them. This method allows researchers to pool and analyze findings from multiple qualitative studies, drawing collective meaning and generating more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena (Bearman & Dawson, 2013; Edwards & Kaimal, 2016). The model of Sandelowski and Barroso's meta-synthesis (2007) has been applied in order to analyze the information in this stage, with the following steps: initial data extraction, the inclusion of data in meta-synthesis, and ultimately, data analysis. Also, the technique of classification of findings and the technique of quantitative meta-summary were used in order to analyze the qualitative findings (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2007) as follows:

Extracting initial data and drawing a descriptive table of data

Data were extracted from each study using a pre-defined and standardized form. This form ensured consistent and systematic collection of information across all included studies. Extracted data encompassed a range of elements, including source code, author(s), title, publication year, publication type, findings related to specific leadership mechanisms identified for culture shape. The form also included space for researcher notes and reflections. A descriptive table (see table 2) of basic information was prepared.

Table 2.

Descriptive table of primary data extracted from research references

1	**Title:** Corporate cultures: the rites and rituals of corporate life **Author/s:** Deal & Kennedy **Year:** 1982 **Type:** Book • The basic organizational structure • The administrative and technical systems • The physical and appearance • Stories, myths and sagas • Formal statements and philosophies • Ceremonies, rituals and traditions • The anointing and celebrating heroes and heroines
2	**Title:** The culture of schools (Chapter 1 in the book titled: Leadership: Examining the elusive) **Author/s:** Deal **Year:** 1987 **Type:** Book • Recreate the history of a school • Articulate shared values • Anoint and celebrate heroes • Reinvigorate rituals and ceremonies • Tell good stories • Work with the informal network of cultural players
3	**Title:** The Organizational Culture Perspective **Author/s:** Ott **Year:** 1989 **Type:** Book • Staff selection • Socialization • Removal of deviating members • Communication mechanisms

4	**Title:** The principal's role in teacher development
	Author/s: Leithwood & Jantzi **Year:** 1990 **Type:** Book
	
	1. strengthening the schools culture
	   o emphasizing shared goals;
	   o collaborative decision-making
	   o reducing teacher isolation
	2. bureaucratic mechanisms
	   o provision of money,
	   o planning and scheduling
	3. staff development
	4. direct and frequent communication
	5. sharing of power and responsibilities
	6. use of symbols and ritual by celebrating

	Title: Organizational culture and leadership

5	**Author/s:** Schein **Year:** 1992 **Type:** Book
	• adapting to their environment • establishing and evolving workgroups • empowering sub-cultures that represent ideal norms • creating systems of task forces and committees to manage the culture
6	**Title:** Leadership & School Culture **Author/s:** Bates **Year:** 1992 **Type:** Conference Papers
	• Pedagogy • Curriculum • Assessment • Discipline
7	**Title:** Organizational Culture in the Management of Mergers **Author/s:** Nahavandi & Malekzadeh **Year:** 1993 **Type:** Book
	• As a role model • Use of the reward system • The selection and recruitment process • Structure and strategy • The physical setting
8	**Title:** Shaping school culture **Author/s:** Deal & Peterson **Year:** 1999 **Type:** Book
	Major symbolic roles of leaders: • Historian: seeks to understand the social and normative past of the school • Anthropological sleuth: analyzes and probes for the current set of norms, values and beliefs that define the current culture • Visionary: works with other leaders and the community to define a deeply value-focused picture of the future • Symbol: affirms values through dress, behavior, attention, routines • Potter: shapes and is shaped by the school's heroes, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, symbols • Poet: uses language to reinforce values and sustains the school's best image of itself • Actor: improvises in the school's inevitable dramas, comedies and tragedies • Healer: oversees transitions and change in the life of the school; heals the wounds of conflict and loss.
9	**Title:** Leadership: Creating Culture Change **Author/s:** Huckshorn & LeBel **Year:** 2002 **Type:** Book
	• Commitment • Mission & vision • Clarifying organizational values • Empowering, supporting, and supervising staff • Using data to inform practice • develop a plan

10	**Title:** Organizational culture and leadership
	Author/s: Schein **Year:** 2004 **Type:** Book
	Primary embedding mechanisms: • What leaders pay attention to, measure and control on a regular basis • How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises • Observed criteria by which leaders allocate scarce resources • Deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching • Observed criteria by which leaders allocate rewards and status • Observed criteria by which leaders recruit, select, promote, retire and excommunicate organizational members *Secondary reinforcement mechanisms:* • Organizational design and structure • Organizational systems and procedures • Organizational rites and rituals • Design of physical space, facades and buildings • Stories, legends and myths about people and events • Formal statements of organizational philosophy, values and creed
11	**Title:** Leaders, Values, and Organizational Climate: Examining Leadership Strategies for Establishing an Organizational Climate Regarding Ethics
	Author/s: Grojean, Resick, Dickson, Smith **Year:** 2004 **Type:** Article
	• Use values-based leadership • Set the example • Establish clear expectations of ethical conduct • Recognize and reward behaviors that support organizational values • Provide feedback, coaching, and support regarding ethical behavior • Be aware of individual differences among subordinates • Establish leader training and mentoring
12	**Title:** Organizational culture and leadership (3th edition)
	Author/s: Schein **Year:** 2006 **Type:** Book
	• Conversations • Resource allocation • Apportionment of power • Instatement of organizational structures and processes

13	**Title:** Management's Role in Shaping Organizational Culture **Author/s:** Kane- Urrabazo **Year:** 2006 **Type:** Article • trust and trustworthiness • Empowerment • Consistency • mentorship
14	**Title:** *The Ownership Quotient: Putting the Service Profit Chain to Work for Unbeatable Competitive Advantage* **Author/s:** Heskett, Sasser & Wheeler **Year:** 2008 **Type:** Book • Establish clear organizational mission and vision and values and set the example by themselves • Reinforcement and investment in culture on a continuous basis • Fairness of leadership • Organizations with clearly codified cultures enjoy labor cost advantages. • Employees and customers loyalty • selective of prospective customers • the best serving the best • foster effective succession in the leadership ranks • Periodic revision of the company's core values and search for best practices both inside and outside the organization
15	**Title:** Understanding and Managing Organizational Culture **Author/s:** O'Donnell & Boyle **Year:** 2008 **Type:** Book • Creating a climate for change • Leaders as champions • Employee engagement and empowerment • Team orientation • Tracking cultural change • Training, rewards and recognition
16	**Title:** Cultural Leadership: Formation of an Ethical Organizational Culture **Author/s:** Armenakis, Brown & Mehta **Year:** 2010 **Type:** Report • Authentic ethical leader • Agents of Cultural Diffusion • Establishing the Organizational Culture • Important Formal and Informal Practices (selection & requirement, socialization, decision making, organizational learning); • Cultural Internalization

17	**Title:** Leadership: Theory, Application & Skill Development
	Author/s: Lussier & Achua　　　　**Year:** 2015　　　　**Type:** Book
	Symbolic Actions: • Leaders serving as role models • Celebrating achievements • Interacting face-to-face with rank-and-file • Matching organizational structure to culture *Substantive Actions:* • Matching HR practices to culture • Matching operating policies and practices to culture • Creating a strategy–culture fit • Aligning reward/incentive system with culture • Matching work environment design to culture • Developing a written values statement

18	**Title:** School culture and leadership of professional learning communities
	Author/s: Carpenter　　　　**Year:** 2015　　　　**Type:** Article
	• Considering effective collaborative system • Empowering • Continuous improvement cycle • Shared leadership structure

19	**Title:** Principal Leadership and Its Link to the Development of a School's Teacher Culture and Teaching Effectiveness: A Case Study of an Award-Winning Teaching Team at an Elementary School
	Author/s: Lee & Li　　　　**Year:** 2015　　　　**Type:** Article
	• Collaborative teaching teams should be developed to release teachers from their self-isolation • To have an effective teaching team, major leaders should be carefully chosen • Principals and administrative staff must set a good model and replace formal leadership with care and service. • Be courteous to quality senior teachers to uphold campus ethics.

20	**Title:** Leadership in the Formation and Change of School Culture (Chapter 8 in the book titled: Chaos, Complexity and Leadership)
	Author/s: Şişman　　　　**Year:** 2015　　　　**Type:** Book
	• Role Modeling and Leadership • Information and Communication Process • Changes in Institutional Structure • Management and Use of Symbols • Use of Stories and Legends • Ceremonies and Meetings • Regulation of the Physical Environment • Education and Socialization Programs

	• Personnel Selection Process • Decision Making Process and Criteria • Administrative Practices • Create a Learning School
21	**Title:** Framework for transforming departmental culture to support educational innovation **Author/s:** Corbo, Reinholz, Dancy & et.al. **Year:** 2016 **Type:** Article
	• Change in the values, beliefs, myths and rituals of the organization • Understand the values that underlie an organization • Align their messages about change with existing or aspirational values. • Try to shift values by altering mission statements or using existing symbols or rituals in new ways.
22	**Title:** The role of system leadership: creating and maintaining an effective school culture and climate **Author/s:** Guy **Year:** 2020 **Type:** Thesis
	• frequent check-ins, • checklists • regular meetings, • mentoring • collaboration

Classifying and summarizing data

After identifying and extracting the initial data, Classifications have been obtained using the classification technique. The explanations and tables that have been presented in the following parts are in response to the most central question of the study, specifically, what are the leadership mechanisms to shape academic culture? At this stage, mechanisms extracted from the text of the studies were separated in different classes according to the similarities and differences in content and function.

This classification is designed by looking again at educational institutions such as schools and universities as an open social system, what Hoy and Miskel (2008) point out. In open systems organizations take inputs from the environment, transform them and produce outputs. In this model, the system's capacity for feedback facilities the

repetitive and cyclic pattern of "input-process-output". Feedback is information about the system that enables it to correct itself (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, pp. 18-21). The open social-system models also have both internal and external feedback mechanisms as their key elements (Hoy & Miskel, 2008, p. 31). By breaking down university systems into these four components, we gain a clearer understanding of how they function. This helps us identify key drivers of success, potential bottlenecks, and areas for improvement. Also, when faced with a problem or opportunity, considering inputs, processes, and potential outputs along with feedback allows for more thoughtful decision-making (Sterman, 2000). Simple frameworks provide a shared language for discussing and understanding complex systems. These frameworks offer a flexible structure that can accommodate changes while maintaining a cohesive understanding of the underlying dynamics.

Results

At this stage, the leadership mechanisms extracted were explained in four main dimensions: pre-organization, operational, output and feedback. Actually, the pre-organization dimension is somehow equivalent to input, with the difference that pre-organizers can refer to the sorting, classification or further preparation of these inputs in addition to the necessary materials and information (Scarf, 1963). The operational dimension deals with the processes and operations carried out for the realization and efficiency of pre-organizers. After that, the operations performed on the inputs will lead to the creation of outputs. Finally, the feedback dimension determines the necessary corrective actions. This four-dimensional framework was developed to address the stages of culture-shaping, ensuring that leadership practices are assessed comprehensively and systematically. In academic leadership

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contexts, this framework is particularly relevant as it emphasizes the importance of cultivating a culture that supports learning, collaboration, and innovation.

The pre-organization phase is critical for academic leaders as it involves creating a shared vision and aligning resources effectively. By thoughtfully sorting and classifying inputs, university leaders can better prepare their institutions to meet the diverse needs of students, faculty, and the broader community. This preparatory work lays the groundwork for a positive organizational culture that values inclusivity and academic excellence.

In the operational dimension, academic leaders must implement processes that facilitate teaching, research, and community engagement. This involves establishing clear policies, promoting interdisciplinary collaboration, and ensuring that faculty and staff have the necessary tools and support. Effective operations in universities lead to an enriched academic environment where innovation can thrive, ultimately enhancing the institution's reputation and effectiveness.

The output dimension reflects the success of academic programs, research initiatives, and student outcomes. By focusing on measurable results, leaders in higher education can identify strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a culture of accountability that encourages both faculty and students to aim high. Celebrating achievements and learning from challenges are vital for maintaining momentum and motivation within the academic community.

Lastly, the feedback dimension allows academic leaders to engage in reflection and continuous development. By soliciting input from faculty, staff, and students, university leaders can identify what

strategies work and which do not, making necessary adjustments that align with the institution's mission and values. This ongoing discourse enhances a culture of openness and shared governance, empowering the academic community to contribute to its growth and adaptability.

In summary, the four-dimensional framework serves as a vital tool for academic leaders striving to shape a culture that prioritizes collaboration, innovation, and continuous improvement. By integrating these four dimensions into their leadership practices, university leaders can create an environment that not only meets the current challenges but also anticipates future needs, ultimately leading to the sustained success of the institution.

1) Pre-organization: In the first category, due to the importance and repetition of basic concepts such as program development, documents, and values, which are known as inputs, before the start of the culture development process, some mechanisms were placed in the theme titled "Pre-organization". In other words, this category encompasses mechanisms that are essential for the university's relevance and sustainability. Without these mechanisms, the continuation of work processes lacks philosophical and logical justification.

2) Operational: In the second category, the content of many mechanisms showed the functional and process aspect of the area of culture shaping. In other words, after preparing the vision and the program, it is time to implement the organizational arrangements and mechanisms developed to advance and realize the shaping of culture and this content was classified as "operational" mechanisms.

3) Output: The third category focuses on leadership mechanisms that aim to foster and promote the university's culture within both internal and external public spheres. These mechanisms serve as channels to

communicate the university's vision for cultural development, reaching audiences both within the university community and in the broader community beyond.

4) Feedback: In the fourth category, some leadership mechanisms are primarily applied after the operational stage to address shortcomings and implement necessary reforms to achieve goals. These mechanisms, which include feedback obtained from both internal (intra-organizational) and external (extra-organizational) mechanisms, can be classified as "feedback."

Combining findings. At this stage, all the subjects that were classified were revised several times according to the suggested categories. Accordingly, the results of reviewing the texts and sources showed that a total of 136 mechanisms have been mentioned by different researchers for a long time, and many of them share the same content in terms of title or content (see table 3).

Table 3.

Combining similar expressions

Similar groups	Final Mechanism
✓ Understand the social and normative past; (8) ✓ Analyzes and probes for the current set of norms, values and beliefs that define the current culture; (8) ✓ Understand the values that underlie an organization (21) ✓ Align their messages about change with existing or aspirational values. (21) ✓ Try to shift values by altering mission statements or using existing symbols or rituals in new ways (21)	**Understand the social and normative past & analyzes and probes for the current set of norms, values and beliefs that define the current culture;**
✓ Formal statements of organizational philosophy (10) ✓ What leaders pay attention to, measure and control on a regular basis (10) ✓ Formal statements and philosophies (1) ✓ emphasizing shared goals; (4)	**Formal statements of organizational philosophy, mission and vision;**

✓ Mission & vision (9) ✓ Establish clear organizational mission and vision (14)	
✓ Formal statements of organizational values and creed (10) ✓ Developing a written values statement (17) ✓ Clarifying organizational values (9) ✓ works with other leaders and the community to define a deeply value-focused picture of the future (8) ✓ Articulate shared values (2) ✓ Establish clear organizational values (14)	**Developing a written values statement & alternating revision**
✓ Use values-based leadership (11) ✓ Authentic ethical leader (16) ✓ Shared leadership structure (18)	**Determine leadership style**
✓ Establish clear expectations of ethical conduct (11)	**Clear expectations**
✓ Develop a plan (9) ✓ Planning and scheduling (4)	**Develop a plan**
✓ Staff selection; (3) ✓ The selection and recruitment process (7) ✓ Personnel Selection Process (20)	**The selection and recruitment process**
✓ Structure and strategy (7) ✓ Organizational design and structure (10) ✓ Instatement of organizational structures (12) ✓ Matching organizational structure to culture (17) ✓ Creating a strategy–culture fit ✓ Changes in Institutional Structure (20) ✓ The basic organizational structure (1)	**Matching structure & strategy**
✓ Organizational systems and procedures (10) ✓ Instatement of organizational processes ✓ Matching HR practices to culture (17) ✓ Matching operating policies and practices to culture ✓ The administrative and technical systems (1) ✓ Bureaucratic mechanisms ✓ Decision Making Process and Criteria (20) ✓ Administrative Practices (20) ✓ Decision making (16)	**Adapting organizational systems and procedures**
✓ Important Informal Practices ✓ Work with the informal network of cultural players (2)	**Create and reinforcement of informal process**
✓ Observed criteria by which leaders allocate scarce resources (10) ✓ Resource allocation (12) ✓ Provision of money (4)	**Provision & allocation of resource**

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✓ Reinforcement and investment in culture on a continuous basis (14)	
✓ Apportionment of power (12) ✓ collaborative decision-making (4) ✓ Sharing of power and responsibilities (4)	**Apportionment of power & responsibilities**
✓ Socialization (3, 16) ✓ Education and Socialization Programs (20)	**Socialization**
✓ Communication mechanisms (3) ✓ Conversations (12) ✓ Interacting face-to-face with rank-and-file (17) ✓ Direct and frequent communication (4) ✓ Information and Communication Process (20) ✓ Regular meetings (22) ✓ Reducing teacher isolation (4)(19)	**Information & communication mechanisms**
✓ Agents of Cultural Diffusion (16) ✓ Empowering sub-cultures that represent ideal norms (5)	**Create network of cultural players**
✓ Empowerment (13) ✓ Employee engagement and empowerment (15) ✓ Training (15) ✓ Empowering, supporting, and supervising staff (9) ✓ Empowering (18) ✓ Staff development (4)	**Employee engagement and empowerment**
✓ Team orientation (15) ✓ Establishing and evolving workgroups (5) ✓ Considering effective collaborative system (18) ✓ Collaboration (22)	**Team orientation**
✓ How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises (10)	**Crises management**
✓ The physical setting (7) ✓ Affirms values through dress, behavior, attention, routines (8) ✓ Design of physical space, facades and buildings (10) ✓ Matching work environment design to culture ✓ Management and Use of Symbols (20) ✓ Using existing symbols or rituals in new ways ✓ The physical and appearance (1) ✓ Regulation of the Physical Environment (20)	**Matching work environment design & physical setting to culture**
✓ As a role model (7) ✓ Deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching (10) ✓ Leaders as champions (15) ✓ Leaders serving as role models (17)	**Leader as a role model**

✓ Principals and administrative staff must set a good model and replace formal leadership with care and service ✓ Principals and administrative staff (19) ✓ Role Modeling and Leadership (20)	
✓ Set the example (11) ✓ Establish clear organizational values and set the example by themselves (14)	**Set the examples**
✓ Use of the reward system (7) ✓ Observed criteria by which leaders allocate rewards and status (10) ✓ Rewards and recognition (15) ✓ Aligning reward/incentive system with culture ✓ Recognize and reward behaviors that support organizational values (11)	**Use of the reward system;**
✓ Shapes and is shaped by the school's heroes, rituals, traditions, ceremonies, symbols (8) ✓ Uses language to reinforce values and sustains the school's best image of itself (8) ✓ Improvises in the school's inevitable dramas, comedies and tragedies (8) ✓ Organizational rites and rituals (10) ✓ Stories, legends and myths about people and events (10) ✓ Celebrating achievements (17) ✓ Ceremonies, rituals and traditions (1) ✓ The anointing and celebrating heroes and heroines (1) ✓ Recreate the history of a school (2) ✓ Anoint and celebrate heroes (2) ✓ Reinvigorate rituals and ceremonies (2) ✓ Tell good stories (2) ✓ Change in the values, beliefs, myths and rituals of the organization (21) ✓ Stories, myths and sagas (1) ✓ use of symbols and ritual by celebrating (4) ✓ Use of Stories and Legends (20) ✓ Ceremonies and Meetings (20)	**Traditions & ceremonies, Stories, legends and myths about people and events;**
✓ Creating a climate for change (15)	**Creating & developing a climate for change**
✓ Commitment (9)	**Make a commitment**
✓ Trust and trustworthiness (13)	**Building trust**
✓ Tracking cultural change (15)	**Tracking cultural change**

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✓ Cultural Internalization (16)	**Cultural Internalization**
✓ Create a Learning School (20) ✓ Organizational learning (16)	**Organizational learning**
✓ Removal of deviating members (3) ✓ Observed criteria by which leaders recruit, select, promote, retire and excommunicate organizational members ✓ Continuous improvement cycle (18)	**Continuous improvement cycle**
✓ Provide feedback, coaching, and support regarding ethical behavior (11)	**Provide feedback, coaching & support regarding valuable behavior**
✓ Mentorship (13) ✓ Establish leader training and mentoring (11) ✓ Mentoring (22)	**Establish leader training & mentoring**

Finally, by combining similar expressions and eliminating duplicates,
33 mechanisms were identified and extracted for leaders in order to
shape culture (see table 4).

Table 4.

Re-framing leadership mechanisms for shaping organizational culture

Dimensions	Sub-dimensions	Mechanisms
Pre-Organization		Understand the social and normative past & analyzes and probes for the current set of norms, values and beliefs that define the current culture;
		Formal statements of organizational philosophy, mission and vision
		Developing a written values statement & alternating revision
		Determine leadership style
		Clear expectations
Operational	**Adaptive**	Develop a plan
		The selection and recruitment process
		Matching structure & strategy
		Adapting organizational systems and procedures
		Create and reinforcement of informal process
		Provision & allocation of resource
		Apportionment of power & responsibilities
		Socialization

		Information & communication mechanisms
		Create informal network of cultural players
		Employee engagement and empowerment
		Establish leader training & mentoring
		Team orientation
		Crises management
	Motivational	Matching work environment design & physical setting to culture
		Leader as a role model
		Set the examples
		Use of the reward system
		Traditions & ceremonies
		Stories, legends and myths about people and events;
	Defense	Creating & developing a climate for change
		Make a commitment
		Building trust
Output		Organizational learning
		Cultural Internalization
Feedback		Tracking cultural change
		Continuous improvement cycle
		Provide feedback, coaching & support regarding valuable behavior

Validation of findings. Having identified and categorized the mechanisms, the next step is to validate the results using a holistic approach that emphasizes the interconnectedness of these mechanisms". Based on this approach, continuous implementation, facilitated by specific mechanisms, serves as a key indicator of the research's validity, as it ensures proper organization and plan development (Cowall, 2002). This is done by early detection and diagnosis of research errors before mistakes can affect and tarnish the data and the results of the research. According to many qualitative researchers, if the researcher follows the principles of the research well, the results of the research will be correct (Nikneshan et al., 2010). Qualitative research naturally has a rotational situation and qualitative researchers, before seeking to draw conclusions, regularly review and revise the information obtained in the research process. This strategy helps the researcher to take corrective measures during the research

process. Confidence in the "sample sufficiency" can ensure the effectiveness and quality of qualitative research, so that it can ensure the access to optimal information and minimize waste (Morse, 1998).

The verification strategy in the present study is the "sample sufficiency". According to this, the sample includes all the studies provided the best and most information about the subject of the research. In the present study several processes of combined validation optimization have been used. These processes include: consulting with the reference librarian about validity of reference sites and search processes (type of validation: descriptive), consulting with a specialist in meta-synthesis research about research methods and steps (validation type: theoretical), consulting with the custodians of academic culture about keywords and necessary references (type of validation: pragmatic), independent search of resources by at least two reviewers (type of validation: descriptive), independent evaluation of each report by at least two re-evaluators (validation type: descriptive-interpretive).

Finally, to understand leadership mechanisms for developing a culture in the university, in this research, a quad categorization was done in the form of pre-organization, operational, output and feedback aspects. This category can be narrated based on the management research literature. Based on this, cultivating a thriving university culture demands strategic planning and proactive leadership. This journey unfolds in four stages:

1. Pre-organization: Analyze current values, beliefs, and cultural highlights to understand your landscape (Schein, 1999). Formulate a clear vision for the desired future culture, translated into specific expectations and regularly updated (Kotter, 2012). Establish a leadership style aligned with this vision to guide the transformation.

2.Operational: Develop a structured operational plan and establish mechanisms for adaptation (Nadler & Tushman, 1989). Reform leadership selection, recruitment, and socialization processes to align with new cultural values (Schein, 1990). Design new organizational processes promoting transparency, information sharing, and collaboration (Ashkanasy & Wilderom, 2008). Implement strategies that support and reinforce the adopted values in practice (Cameron & Quinn, 2006). Success hinges on efficient resource allocation, power sharing, fostering informal networks, strengthening internal processes, and developing strong work teams (Katzenbach & Smith, 1999). Leaders serve as crucial role models, influencing cultural development (Yukl, 2013) through their actions and embodying the desired values; leverage successful cultural examples like utilizing storytelling, ceremonies, and traditions to motivate and orient members (Schein, 2010) and implement timely rewards to motivate and reinforce new values (Lawler & Mohrman, 2003); cultivate a positive climate for change through open communication, trust building, and commitment (Kotter & Cohen, 2007); develop crisis management strategies to mitigate potential resistance.

3. *Output*: In this stage, organizational learning has taken place among the members, and the culture has been internalized as a result of this process.

4. *Feedback*: Employ monitoring and improvement cycles provide feedback and track cultural changes (Cameron & Quinn, 2006).

By following this four-stage approach, universities can foster a thriving culture that promotes innovation, collaboration, and student success.

Discussion and Conclusion

Regardless of the technique used, what is referred to as "academic culture" is always a cohesive network of all the components, elements, beliefs, symbols, assumptions, experiences, and even the presence of university staff and faculty who have played a significant role in its construction. In the end, the public perception of the university will emerge because of the meaningful interactions among these elements and their potential outcomes. This external image will develop over time and have an impact on the university's cultural standing in society. Therefore, universities need to actively regulate their academic culture since they are among the value-oriented institutions in society. In this approach, professional organizations should create meaningful and reciprocal control and coordination systems for meaning management (Dill, 2012).

Based on this, the present research was carried out to look at how leaders shape university culture. In order to achieve this, the ideal mechanisms that university leaders can employ to bring about a desirable culture were examined and extracted from related prior studies. The final mechanisms were then compiled in a four-dimensional framework consisting of pre-organizing, operation, output and feedback dimensions for use in the academic environment. However, it should be remembered that according to what is known as a general rule in decision-making, selecting the best way of action from several options, always necessitates careful consideration of the various dimensions and aspects of a way of action, cost-benefits analysis, passing through its negative points and continuing past its positive points (Jaeger et al. 2013). Therefore, it is important to consider the mechanisms from a practical standpoint in order to have a more complete understanding of them. This means one framework is not

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always the best, each framework may be used in a different manner depending on what is most advantageous and compatible in each circumstance. One of the existing frameworks in the literature may adequately address the university's unique circumstances.

The key feature that sets the current study apart from other research in the area of leadership practice to shape culture can be summed up as follows: the research's final framework, is provided in "categories of dimensions and components". This categorization, which has shown the procedures before to, during, and after the leader's performance, offers the framework for making it easier to comprehend and identify the root of potential issues with culture-shaping. For instance, there have been instances in the university where the leader's performance in the "pre-organizer" dimension has been favorable, the vision and missions and the definition of the concepts of culture have been properly presented, the correct leadership style has been identified, and the expectations have been clearly defined, but the process of adaptation of structure and strategy or socialization, has not been implemented well. Using the thought-out framework in this situation, it is feasible to pinpoint the primary cause of the issue and find a solution without upsetting or changing other components or reworking them. Only the studies by Schein (2004) and Lussier and Achua (2015) show a "categorized" feature congruent with the current study.

The current study's utilization of a meta-synthesis method is another distinction from similar studies. From a theoretical perspective, the present study has gathered and compiled all of the materials that have been made public (so far) in the literature. This provides a good basis on which other scholars working in the area of leadership and culture might build a cultural action model for university leaders.

Additionally, the accumulation of these elements demonstrates that culture is formed by a variety of methods that go beyond one or two straightforward modifications and that each of these elements must exist for culture to exist. The 22 studies examined in this research, each the product of extensive efforts by researchers, have emphasized different aspects of the leadership mechanisms for shaping culture. Nevertheless, the combination of these mechanisms undoubtedly enhances the performance and experience of earlier researchers.

The comparison of the measured criteria, in the end, reveals the similarities and differences between the present study and studies of relevant research backgrounds. However, discussing theories, models, and frameworks is pointless until they are put into action in the actual world and their advantages and disadvantages are examined. The most comprehensive theories may not provide the greatest solution in a given circumstance, while the most basic and inconsequential subjects often work best in actual situations.

It is important to note some limitations that impacted this research: the lack of extensive engagement from qualitative researchers in this specific topic, particularly in academic and higher education environments, has led to a shortage of studies reviewed in this field. Additionally, the existence of varying definitions of the concept of leadership mechanisms across different studies inevitably forced researchers to exclude many identified studies. Furthermore, the absence of clearly defined criteria in qualitative research for retaining or discarding a research work from the research process has resulted in inconsistencies in research methodologies.

Therefore, it is recommended that future research, at the theoretical stage, actively engage academic leaders and experts by presenting the study's framework and final components for their evaluation of the

research's validity and viability. This collaboration will ensure a comprehensive understanding and practical relevance of the proposed framework. On the operational side, it is crucial to clearly outline implementation requirements, establish actionable steps, and conduct thorough condition analyses that consider input resources, potential barriers, risks, and opportunities for each mechanism. Furthermore, a wide array of studies should be pursued to uncover unseen influences on academic culture among university students. This includes evaluating the long-term effectiveness of higher education cultural programs in the context of ongoing societal changes and developing a cohesive framework for cultural strategy that aligns with each university's distinct cultural documentation. Emphasizing honesty, transparency, and effective communication throughout these processes will significantly enhance the quality and impact of the research initiatives.

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Virtual Professional Development for School Leadership: Designing and Testing a Practical Web-based Simulation for Classroom Observation

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Abstract	Article Info
Among numerous responsibilities, conducting effective classroom observations is crucial for school leaders. This research explores the perspectives of 23 aspiring and practicing school leaders about their experiences of learning classroom observation skills with LeadWise simulation, an interactive e-learning tool. Qualitative analyses of text data collected via an open-ended survey revealed overall positive perceptions of the simulation training among the participants. The participants benefited from simulation-based professional development and viewed it as an opportunity for ongoing training. They also emphasized the possibility of acquiring practical application experiences in an interactive learning environment. While both groups of school leaders benefited from the simulation, aspiring and less experienced practicing leaders seemed to value the learning opportunities offered by the simulation more than	

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experienced leaders. Yet, all the participants agreed on the significance of well-designed simulations with quality learning materials and expressed their interest in further training using web-based simulations.

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, empirical studies have provided ample evidence that school leaders and their practices can significantly affect various educational processes. Most importantly, school leaders play a key role in overall school improvement and influence student outcomes through their practices focusing on teaching and learning processes (Hallinger, 2005; Laursen et al., 2024; Leithwood et al., 2008; Tan et al., 2024). Therefore, one of the major shifts in the educational policy landscape has been the increasing attention to leaders' engagement with instruction (Grissom et al., 2021; Hallinger et al., 2020). Instructional leadership practices, which involve various actions related to improving teaching and learning processes, such as providing guidance and support for teachers and participating in curriculum design, can contribute to school effectiveness and academic performance (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Robinson et al., 2008).

School leaders are increasingly expected to guide teachers in implementing effective instructional strategies and enhancing student learning. Effective classroom observation has become critically important since it enables school leaders to gain insights into teachers' classroom performances and students' learning experiences (Marshall, 2012). Through classroom observations, school leaders gather data on various classroom activities, such as instructional practices, teacher-student interactions, curriculum implementation, classroom management, and assessment processes, allowing them to provide constructive feedback to teachers (Danielson, 2007; Zepeda, 2013).

Related research has focused on training school leaders for effective classroom observation. Several studies provided examples of leader preparation for classroom observation utilizing traditional class-based pedagogies supplemented with video technologies or school-embedded practical activities (Baecher et al., 2016; Bergin et al., 2017; Carraway & Young, 2015). However, applying simulation-based approaches in school leaders' classroom observation training has been under-researched despite its high relevance for developing leaders' instructional leadership skills (Militello et al., 2021).

Scenario-based learning activities have been essential for school leadership preparation programs, particularly in the United States (US) (Anderson et al., 2018; Dexter et al., 2022). Simulations enable the active engagement of participants in such learning activities, in or outside of the classroom environment, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge to practical challenges (Dexter et al., 2020; Errington, 2011). Despite the long history of using educational simulations in leadership preparation and the growing trend of online learning and digitalization, digital simulations (computer, web, or

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video-based) have not been used widely in educational leadership programs (Dexter et al., 2020; Hallinger et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, this research describes the development of a practical, interactive classroom observation simulation using one of the common e-learning platforms, Articulate, and qualitatively reports its pilot implementation for the professional development of aspiring and practicing school leaders in the US.

Literature Review

Effective Professional Development for Classroom Observation

There has been increasing research evidence supporting the effectiveness of various professional development activities in equipping school leaders with the essential knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish their demanding tasks (Aas & Blom, 2018; Gümüş & Bellibaş, 2016; Hayes, 2019). Therefore, providing more professional development opportunities to both pre-service and in-service school leaders has become crucial for many educational systems around the world (Brauckmann et al., 2023; Lazenby et al., 2022; Rowland, 2017).

School leaders must possess specific knowledge and skills to fulfill their classroom observation role. In addition to evaluating the alignment of various classroom activities with standards, they should communicate effectively with teachers and provide feedback to ensure teachers' professional growth and high-quality teaching and learning in their schools (DiPaola & Wagner, 2018). Therefore, there has been a pressing need to develop the capacity of school leaders to conduct effective classroom observations (Garza et al., 2016).

Professional development programs for school leaders can play a significant role in addressing this need and fostering instruction-focused conversations between teachers and school leaders (McBrayer & Rahimi, 2023). However, recent research has shown that in the US context, most states do not have well-developed, research-driven policies aimed at in-service principal training (Davis et al., 2020). Some training programs offered in partnership among school districts, universities, and educational boards could be effective (Darling-Hammond et al., 2022). However, not all school leaders can access such continuous, high-quality on-the-job training (Rowland, 2017).

Moreover, existing professional development programs are often highly theoretical and detached from daily practices and challenges (Rowland, 2017; White, 2020). Kolb (1984) emphasized that the learning process could be enhanced when learners immerse themselves in practical, real-world experiences. The author proposed an experiential learning model that places individuals' objective and subjective experiences at the core of the learning process. Experiential learning implies that knowledge and skills acquisition stem from learners' active engagement with practical, hands-on situations (Kolb, 2015). Professional development activities should provide experiential learning opportunities and other forms of support, such as mentoring, coaching, and timely feedback (Levin et al., 2020). For classroom observation, in particular, practice opportunities regarding the pre-observation process, collecting and using data through observation, and fostering instruction-focused post-observation conversations are crucial (Zepeda, 2013). Professional development programs providing such opportunities are more likely to enhance leaders' capacity and create a long-term impact.

Through technology-enhanced professional development opportunities, school leaders can leverage various options to enhance their knowledge, skills, and collaboration with a more flexible arrangement (Carpenter & Munshower, 2019; O'Dowd & Dooly, 2022). Accordingly, virtual classroom observation has been used as a technology-enhanced strategy to facilitate the classroom observation process, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also serves as a means of improving the observation skills and overall development of school leaders and teacher candidates while engaging them in experiential learning opportunities (Andrew et al., 2021; Lynch et al., 2021; Mehta, 2023). For example, the Practitioner-Based Mentor-Teacher Candidate Model utilizes virtual classroom observations to conduct evaluations that offer both teacher and leader candidates genuine and thoughtful feedback (McBrayer & Rahimi, 2023). Such models emphasize the importance of viewing classroom observations as an ongoing process.

Digital Simulations for School Leaders' Development

Various disciplines like medicine, the military, and aviation enjoy using digital simulations for different purposes, including personnel training. For example, in healthcare, simulations allow medical professionals to immerse themselves in real-world scenarios for training their clinical skills, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities, as well as preparing to serve in leadership roles in an interactive, feedback-rich environment without endangering patient safety (Koivisto, 2020). Similarly, simulations help avoid risks associated with live training while offering authentic opportunities for learners to train and improve military skills (Kubola et al., 2024). The training of employees in aviation also benefits from the utilization of simulations, as it can substantially increase flight safety (Ziakkas et al.,

2023). Along with providing realistic, hands-on opportunities, it is agreed across various fields that digital simulations enhance the availability and accessibility of training, thus expanding opportunities for continuous professional development (Dantas et al., 2023; Källström et al., 2022).

Although authentic experiences, skills development, and training accessibility demonstrate great potential for digital simulations to be utilized for school leadership preparation and development, their usage in educational leadership development programs is relatively new (Hallinger & Wang, 2020; White, 2020). A limited amount of studies, primarily conducted in the US context and mainly engaging graduate students as subjects, have provided evidence that this type of experiential learning could foster the development of critical leadership skills, such as effective decision-making, strategic thinking, collaboration, and result in higher self-efficacy and self-confidence of the school leaders (Gilbert, 2017; Gilbert et al., 2018; Hallinger et al., 2017; Volante et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2024). In addition, few researchers have argued that participation in a learning simulation contributed to the development of school leadership capacities, enriching their understanding of effective strategies of change implementation and improving their overall perceptions of school innovations (Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Nguyen et al., 2024; Strycker, 2016). Digital simulations can also aid aspiring leaders in transitioning from their roles as teachers to their new roles as educational leaders. In their inquiry, Piro and O'Callaghan (2021) suggested that assuming leadership roles via the simulations could facilitate the future transition to school leader positions.

Digital simulations also offer substantial potential for professional development in the context of classroom observations, although the evidence of their utilization is limited to a few studies. Research by Militello et al. (2021) exploring educational leaders' experiences with a virtual reality platform affirmed that innovative methods, such as immersive virtual reality experiences, can be important milestones in enhancing school leaders' classroom observation skills. Another recent study by Ceballos and Bixler (2024) delved into school leaders' experiences with a mixed-reality simulation. While mainly focusing on developing leaders' post-observation feedback skills, the study inferred that simulations prove beneficial for cultivating leaders' instructional conversation capacities.

Overall, digital simulations' potential for enhancing leadership preparation programs, especially those aimed at developing classroom observation skills, holds significant promise. By promoting the adoption of observations and meaningful conversations, such technologies could facilitate a shift from mere evaluation to a more comprehensive approach to improving teacher practice. In a simulated environment, school leaders can explore various scenarios and practice relevant skills (DeJong & Grundmeyer, 2018).

Development of LeadWise

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Design Process

Developing interactive digital learning experiences requires designers to bring together theories, practices, and experiences from multiple disciplines (Akcaoglu, 2014; Akcaoglu et al., 2023), including knowledge of content/skill domains, digital tools, and design processes and principles. The training tool used in this research is an interactive simulation developed by the first two authors of this paper;

one is an expert on educational technology with a particular focus on digital learning tools (Akcaoglu, 2016; Akcaoglu et al., 2022), and the other is an educational leadership scholar with particular expertise on instructional leadership (Cansoy et al., 2024; Gümüş & Akcaoglu, 2013; Gümüş et al., 2021).

To create an e-learning experience for classroom observation, we first identified key elements from the related literature. Benefitting from the extant literature (Danielson, 2007; Glickman et al., 2001; Marshall, 2012; Zepeda, 2013), the designed simulation emphasized the various steps in conducting classroom observations, including planning, observing, analyzing, providing feedback, and reflecting. During the development process, the effectiveness and limitations of scenario-based learning were considered within the capabilities of the software utilization, ensuring a balanced approach to the simulation's implementation (Errington, 2011).

Software and User Interface Design

Articulate, an e-learning platform, was used to create an engaging and interactive online learning experience for this project. Articulate has a user-friendly interface, offering an intuitive design that allows quick learning and adaptation, even for those without extensive technical expertise. It could also be used in various devices, including tablets and smartphones, ensuring accessibility for a diverse audience. Additionally, the platform's customization capabilities, including the creation of custom interactions, assessments, and feedback, align with the needs of the research.

The platform allows for linear stories, which can be likened to guided tours with interactivity built in. Throughout their experience, the

learners engage with a set of questions and receive feedback based on their responses. The process follows a linear path, meaning that the participants' responses do not change the content of the subsequent questions. To take full advantage of this, a story was developed to be the basis of each simulation scenario, aligned with learning goals and objectives. First, different teacher profiles were created (two examples are provided below in Figure 1), and an option for selecting a teacher to continue classroom observation was added. Some hints for each teacher were also provided before starting the observation (Figure 2). At this stage, learners were expected to collect some background information about the teachers and, based on that, make an informed decision on which teacher's practice they would engage with for an observation.
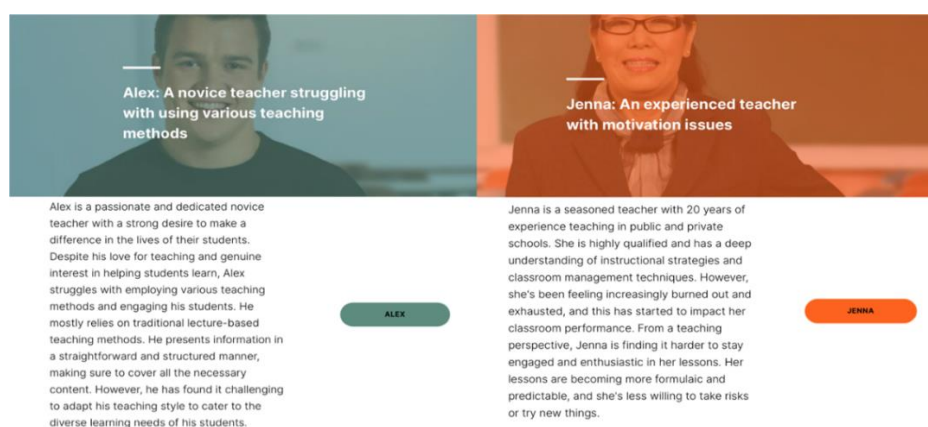

Figure 1. *Examples of Teacher Profiles*

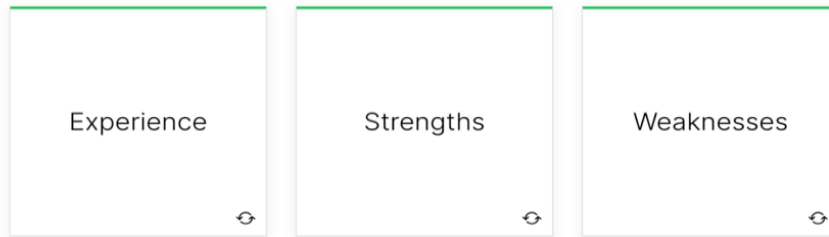## Alex: Hints

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Figure 2. *Hints before Starting the Observation Process*

Due to the linear flow afforded by Articulate, we considered creating our story in the "teach then practice" format. Therefore, based on our objectives, we identified key terms and/or content and introduced them at the beginning of each step (Figure 3). During this "teaching" stage, learners could acquire foundational knowledge about each step of classroom observation (pre-observation conference, observation, post-observation feedback) and enhance their understanding of the process.

Figure 3. *Teaching the Basics*

Following the teaching phase, we provided a personal, interactive experience in each scenario, where the users needed to make some decisions based on their previous learning to solve a problem. For example, in our pre-conference scenario, users go through the steps to determine the best practices and the decision-making process, from the easiest to the more complex ones. We used interactivity to add engagement through immediate visual feedback (Figure 4).
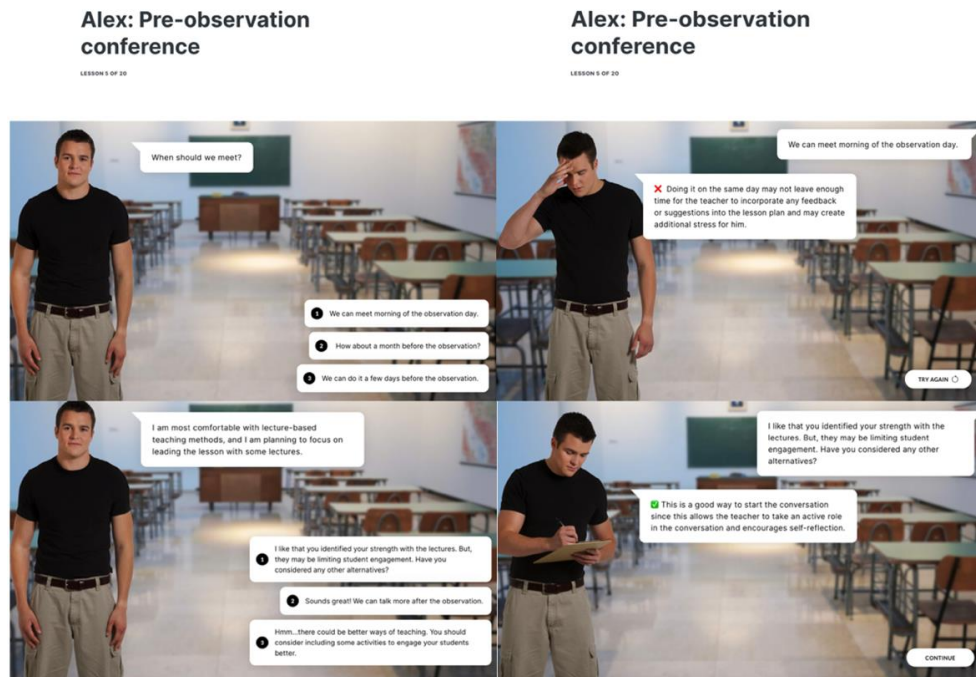
Figure 4. *Illustrations of Immediate Feedback*

Table 1 below summarizes the learning and cognitive activities that learners would engage in at each phase of their preparation experience with the simulation.

Table 1.

Learning and Cognitive Activities Prompted by LeadWise

#	Phase	Learning activity	Cognitive activity
1	Selecting scenario	1. Reviewing teacher profiles; 2. Gathering background information; 3. Selecting a teacher for observation.	1. Information gathering; 2. Decision-making.
2	Teaching the basics	1. Reading about the key terms and concepts.	1. Knowledge acquisition; 2. Comprehension development.
3	Practice and feedback	1. Answering multiple-choice questions; 2. Reflecting/revising based on feedback.	1. Decision-making; 2. Problem-solving; 3. Practical application.

Investigating the Effectiveness of LeadWise: Pilot Study

To ensure continuous improvement of the developed simulation, we piloted it and gathered feedback via qualitative data involving open-ended survey questions to gauge participants' experiences and perceptions and evaluate its technical performance and usability. Qualitative open-ended surveys invite participants to answer a range

of questions about a specific topic using their own words (Braun et al., 2021). Since the study aimed at collecting only a brief amount of data from each participant, it was deemed appropriate to use an open-ended survey instead of an interview design. Another reason for selecting this method over interviews was the narrow focus of the data collection, which required gathering only participants' feedback on the simulation (Braun et al., 2021). Using this study design allowed for the collection of rigorous and subject-focused data that aligned with the purposes and scope of the study.

Participants and Implementation

Students in an educational leadership master's program at a state university in Georgia, US, were invited to participate in the pilot study. A diverse group of aspiring and practicing K-12 school leaders (n=23) participated. Among all participants, nine were aspiring leaders (experienced teachers), and 14 were practicing school leaders (principals and vice principals) with various levels of leadership experience. This purposive sampling strategy ensures the inclusion of a diverse group of participants with varied experiences and backgrounds, aligning with the study's objective to receive comprehensive feedback for future improvement (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The distribution of the participants' teaching experience, role, and location is shown in Table 2 below. The sampling technique was also supplemented by the convenience sampling strategy (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), indicating that the researchers recruited participants who were easily accessible through their professional networks.

Table 2.

Participant Demographics

Participant no.	Participant category	Experience level	Location
Participant 1	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Urban
Participant 2	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 3	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 4	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 5	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 6	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 7	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 8	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Rural
Participant 9	Aspiring leader	Practicing teacher (4-20 years)	Rural
Participant 10	Practicing leader	New to leadership (0-3 years)	Urban
Participant 11	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Urban
Participant 12	Practicing leader	New to leadership (0-3 years)	Suburban
Participant 13	Practicing leader	New to leadership (0-3 years)	Suburban

Participant 14	Practicing leader	New to leadership (0-3 years)	Suburban
Participant 15	Practicing leader	New to leadership (0-3 years)	Suburban
Participant 16	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 17	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 18	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 19	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Suburban
Participant 20	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Rural
Participant 21	Practicing leader	Veteran leadership (20+ years)	Rural
Participant 22	Practicing leader	Veteran leadership (20+ years)	Rural
Participant 23	Practicing leader	Novice leadership (4-20 years)	Virtual

Before engaging in any research activities, the participants were provided with detailed information about the study and asked to sign the consent forms. They were also assured that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected, and that no personal information would be disclosed at any research stage. Afterward, the participants were provided access to the developed simulation, guiding them through a scenario related to classroom observation. Facilitation and support were offered throughout the implementation, ensuring participants' understanding and engagement with the simulated tasks.

Instruments and Data Collection

At the end of the simulation, participants were asked to fill out an online survey using a Google Form. The survey included open-ended items to capture insights into participants' experiences, perceptions, and suggestions for improvement. Specifically, the participants provided feedback for the following questions:

- Can you provide any feedback about the usefulness of this training to better prepare you as a current or aspiring school leader?

- From a content standpoint, what resonated with you, and/or what would you suggest we do for improvement?

- From an interactive and design standpoint, what resonated with you, and/or what would you suggest we do for improvement?

- What topics would you suggest for additional training opportunities beyond this one?

- Would any of the topics provided by edWeek be of interest to you to engage in a virtual training like this one? edWeek Link: https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/opinion-11-critical-issues-facing-educators-in-2023/2022/12

The first three authors designed the survey collaboratively, drawing on their expertise in educational leadership and educational technology. The third author also had extensive teaching and school leadership experience in the US context. A review of previous studies was also conducted.

Data Analysis

The surveys gathered through Google Forms were exported as a CSV file for analysis. Then, the survey data were analyzed using a thematic

analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To minimize researcher bias, the researchers performed the data coding collaboratively (Saldaña, 2015). Two authors completed the coding independently and then met to discuss their codes and reach an agreement. The remaining two authors were also informed of the process, and a Zoom meeting was conducted to decide on a few cases jointly.

After the coding phase was completed, similar codes were placed under broader categories, which were further classified into key themes (Maxwell, 2013). Four key themes emerged as a result of the analysis, and each of them was discussed and interpreted in the context of the study's objectives. Table 3 below demonstrates the coding process using the example of one of the themes. The insights gained from the analysis helped the researchers understand the participants' experiences and contributed to the broader understanding of the effectiveness of the simulation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Table 3

Example of the Coding Process

Participant's response	Code	Category	Theme
"I think the specific questioning and feedback options presented in the pre- and post-observation were helpful." (Participant 14)	Usefulness of feedback in pre- and post-observation	Usefulness of feedback skills	
"I enjoyed the multiple-choice feedback if an incorrect answer was selected." (Participant 12)	Usefulness of multiple-choice feedback in the simulation		

"I enjoyed that the experience required me to consistently engage and make decisions. It was not a passive experience." (Participant 16)	Consistent engagement with the simulation	Conversational nature of simulation	Appreciation of feedback opportunities and interactivity
"I enjoyed the prompts and how it was set up like we were having a conversation" (Participant 7)	Interactive nature of the training		
"Something that is important is understanding how to give balanced feedback. Oftentimes, leaders can be just punitive or just positive." (Participant 3)	Learning to provide balanced feedback	Willingness to further develop feedback skills	
"How to provide constructive feedback from observations. For example, giving ideas for improvement" (Participant 6)	Learning to provide constructive feedback		

Findings

Setting Directions

Based on the data analysis, four major themes were identified: perspectives on the format of the training, appreciation of feedback opportunities and interactivity, and the role of practice in expertise development. Table 4 summarizes the key findings for each theme.

Table 4.

Summary of Key Findings

Themes	Key findings
Perspectives on the format of the training	1. Benefitting from scenario-based professional development format 2. Opportunity for continuous professional development 3. The need to enhance content and interface
Appreciation of feedback opportunities and interactivity	1. Usefulness of feedback 2. Conversational nature of simulation 3. Willingness to further develop feedback skills
Role of practice in expertise development	1. Appreciating real-world experiences 2. Relevance to current work practices 3. Further training on conducting observations and other topics

Perspectives on the Format of the Training

The major finding from the participants' responses was valuing scenario-based learning as a professional development opportunity. This was mentioned by 10 participants, mostly by aspiring and less experienced practicing school leaders. The participants advocated for the significance of training opportunities and emphasized the value of simulations and coaching. One of the school leaders mentioned, "I loved this simulation! It felt very real, and the responses from the teacher seemed very reasonable" (Participant 12), reflecting the common sentiment of enjoying the format among the participants.

The participants also emphasized the value of the simulation program for continuous training opportunities, which are vital for school leaders. One of the participants indicated, "It [training] is a good way to be reminded of best practices and can help a new teacher or new leader to understand the observation process" (Participant 11).

Although most of the participants expressed that they enjoyed this format of training and perceived the design as easy to navigate, they also emphasized the importance of ongoing refinement and enhancement of learning materials. This was mentioned by seven participants, including both aspiring and practicing leaders. For instance, one of the participants stated, "I would say add more detail about the process and simulations. For example, provide actual videos of what is happening in a classroom and ask, "What did you notice?" (Participant 5). In this excerpt, the participant suggested offering more explanations for the simulations and proposed using videos as supporting materials. Among other suggestions for content enhancement, the participants highlighted providing complete examples, offering opportunities for written feedback, ensuring the accuracy of the content, and improving the program interface.

Appreciation of Feedback Opportunities and Interactivity

Another significant finding that emerged from participants' responses was the appreciation for immediate feedback opportunities and the interactivity provided by the training program. Sixteen out of 23 school leaders, particularly the aspiring and less experienced practicing leaders, found the opportunity to receive immediate feedback on their training experience very helpful. For instance, one of the participants stated, "I enjoyed the multiple-choice feedback if an incorrect answer was selected. It allowed for me to reflect on why I was wrong, rather

than just letting me guess again" (Participant 12). As the participant explained, the feedback was necessary for their further understanding of and reflection on the content of the simulation program.

Participants also emphasized that they particularly enjoyed the interactive nature and conversational mode of the design, allowing them to engage as active learners and interact with the content. As one of the participants mentioned, "I enjoyed that the experience required me to consistently engage and make decisions. It was not a passive experience. The speaking bubble sometimes represented the teacher's words. Other times, it was the system/directions" (Participant 16).

In addition, three participants, two of which were aspiring leaders, expressed their interest in receiving further training focused explicitly on feedback skills. For example, when asked about the topics for additional training, one of the participants responded, "Something that is important is understanding how to give balanced feedback. Oftentimes, leaders can be just punitive or just positive. Neither really supports the growth of an employee" (Participant 3). This further illustrates the value that the participants placed on the development of their feedback-giving capacity as well as their understanding of the importance of providing constructive feedback.

Role of Practice in Expertise Development

The analysis demonstrated that the participants appreciated that the content of the training was relevant, and the materials and mode of learning provided real-world experiences. The practical usefulness of the training was highlighted by 10 out of 23 participants and was relevant for school leaders at all experience levels, although aspiring and novice practicing leaders mentioned it more frequently. The

participants appreciated the variety of options and scenarios reflecting real-world experiences, viewing them as valuable opportunities for practice. One of the participants responded, "I love how the training provided different scenarios we might encounter and how to effectively respond" (Participant 5). The leaders were primarily elaborating on how the examples in the simulation were well-aligned with their leadership practices. One of the participants mentioned, "Different teacher profiles allowed for me to think about a current teacher I am mentoring and help me reflect on how I am currently doing while providing suggestions for the future" (Participant 12), indicating that the materials provided resonated with their current work experiences.

The participants' appreciation of practice opportunities for their expertise development was further reinforced by their willingness to participate in further training. Seven participants, five of which were aspiring leaders, suggested topics that would elaborate more on various aspects of conducting classroom observations, such as taking notes, engaging in paired observations with other leaders, evaluating observations, and giving constructive feedback. As one participant noted, "I would be interested in seeing more about the next steps. Now that we've seen this and discussed what the classroom observation looks like, how are we giving feedback? What does that look like?" (Participant 23).

The next finding that emerged from the analysis is the suggestion for arranging a training program on communication (written and oral) with other school stakeholders. This was mentioned by five participants, most of whom were aspiring and less experienced practicing leaders. To illustrate, two of them mentioned "parent

communication/conferencing from a leadership standpoint" (Participant 12) and "addressing crucial conversations, addressing challenges with staff" (Participant 13) as the topics to consider for further training.

Participants also reviewed a list of topics on EducationWeek titled "11 Critical Issues Facing Educators in 2023" and selected the ones they would like to receive more professional development on. The topic that attracted the most interest was social-emotional learning, selected by a total of seven participants. A closer inspection of the data revealed that the interest in social-emotional learning among educators existed across different experience levels. The following most selected topics were de-implementation, teacher shortage, and poverty.

Overall, the findings suggest that both aspiring and practicing school leaders value training that enhances their skills and knowledge. While both groups benefited from simulation-based training and appreciated feedback opportunities and practical learning experiences, aspiring and less experienced practicing school leaders more frequently highlighted the value of those activities for their learning. The findings also indicated that school leaders placed strong emphasis on the continuous enhancement of the learning materials and ensuring the quality and consistency of the program. Understanding the specific needs of school leaders with various experience levels can inform the design and delivery of professional development initiatives tailored to each group's specific needs and preferences.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this paper, we investigated the application of an interactive web-based simulation to improve classroom observation skills among school leaders. The context for this investigation arises from the recognition that school leaders play an indispensable role in enhancing educational outcomes by guiding teachers to employ effective instructional strategies. Classroom observations, as highlighted by Marshall (2012) and Danielson (2007), are essential for this purpose, offering a vital window into the classroom environment and opportunities for professional growth.

The findings of the study indicated that the participants benefited from the scenario-based format and agreed that this type of training can be used for the continuous professional development of school leaders. This finding suggests that scenario-based format, and educational simulations in particular, can be applied to enhance the quality of the current professional development programs for school leaders. This aligns with previous research findings, which stress the effectiveness of simulation-based learning for school leaders' critical skills development and for improving their leadership practices (Gilbert, 2017; Gilbert et al., 2018; Hallinger & Kantamara, 2001; Hallinger et al., 2017; Nguyen et al., 2024; Piro & O'Callaghan, 2021; Strycker, 2016; Volante et al., 2020; Walker et al., 2024). However, unlike other studies mainly recruiting aspiring leaders as participants, our study demonstrated that this training format could also be advantageous for practicing school leaders by offering them necessary on-the-job, real-time professional development.

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The study also found that practice opportunities, an interactive environment, and the availability of feedback are crucial for school leaders' professional development, which was demonstrated by the participants' shared recognition and appreciation of those features. This finding reaffirms the relevance of experiential learning strategies (Kolb, 1984) and underscores the need to revise the outdated pedagogies of leadership professional development programs to provide more practical application experiences for learners (Dexter et al., 2022; Rowland, 2017). This finding also resonates with the literature on effective leadership development programs, highlighting the importance of providing opportunities for practice, reflection, and constructive feedback (Ayers et al., 2020; Ralph, 2015).

Such innovative learning methods, particularly the use of scenarios enabling school leaders to bridge theory and practice, simulate real-world situations, and experiment with feedback strategies, can be particularly helpful for training school leaders to conduct observations. The findings of the current study imply that digital simulations are capable of providing learners with necessary practical experiences and an interactive environment, which enables them to accumulate their classroom observation skills. These findings contribute to the limited research evidence regarding the use of digital simulations for preparing school leaders to conduct classroom observations and further strengthen the case for simulation-based training and its value in developing observation skills (Ceballos & Bixler, 2024; Militello et al., 2021). The findings also revealed distinct patterns in the perceptions and preferences of aspiring, novice and more experienced leaders, which aligns with previous research on the diverse needs of educators at different career stages (Brennan, 2017). As aspiring and some of the practicing leaders in this study had very

little experience in leadership, they might have appreciated the simulation as a tool to assist with their transition to leadership roles, as discussed in Piro and O'Callaghan (2021). This finding also aligns with the notion that effective professional development for educators should bridge the gap between theory and classroom practice (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The diverse perspectives of school leaders with varying leadership experiences underscore the importance of tailoring professional development programs to cater to the specific needs and preferences of each group. Personalized learning approaches have been shown to enhance engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes (Pane et al., 2015), suggesting that customized training experiences could be more effective in fostering professional growth. Simulations or e-learning are highly adaptable and open to personalization. Our findings indicate the value of our approach for leader professional learning. We should also note that given the user-friendly interface of the interactive e-learning platforms, our study can point to potential training tools for school leaders. Higher education faculty and/or district professional development leaders can create similar experiences on different topics with ease (after a quick training), without the need for a technology expert.

Nevertheless, the simplicity of development should not lead to a compromise in the quality of the training program. Most participants' responses in the current study aligned regarding the need for content improvement and simulation design enhancement, highlighting the importance of enhancing learning materials, ensuring content quality and consistency, and improving the program's interface. Indeed, the researchers suggest that the quality of the simulation and the quality

of the learning it offers are fundamental if simulations are to become an essential component in leadership training programs (Mann et al., 2011). Also, when properly designed, simulations can transform leaders' attitudes to change and encourage them to introduce innovations in schools (Gilbert, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial that the developers of the simulation collaborate with educators and researchers and adopt a comprehensive approach when designing the software, taking into consideration both the content of the program and the quality of the software interface. These findings also reinforce the significance of the collection of feedback and analytics, enabling efficient updates and improvements to the professional development content and delivery.

The important role of practice in leaders' expertise development is further reinforced by their keen interest in further training. Their suggestions for additional simulation topics focused on additional training in classroom observations, professional development in communication strategies with school stakeholders, and social-emotional learning. These findings align with the literature underscoring the importance of effective observation practices (Danielson, 2007; Garza et al., 2016), and communication strategies for educators (Grissom & Condon, 2021), as well as the benefits of social-emotional learning for student outcomes and school climate (Durlak et al., 2022). Incorporating these topics into future professional development programs could enhance their practical relevance and better prepare educational leaders for the multifaceted challenges they face. Simulations and scenario-based e-learning experiences can effectively address these specific training needs through interactive and immersive scenarios.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights, certain limitations should be acknowledged. The sample size and geographical constraints may limit the generalizability of the results. Additionally, potential biases in self-reported data should be considered. Future research could conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of tailored simulation-based professional development programs for school leaders on educator effectiveness, school improvement, and student outcomes.

Conclusions

Our study provides preliminary evidence of the effectiveness of the simulation while also offering several areas for improvement. We hope to further develop our simulation training based on the data and contribute to the broader discourse on the integration of innovative tools like simulation-based training in educational leadership. We also aspire to offer insights into how simulation-based training can enhance the instructional supervision skills of school leaders, contributing to the ongoing improvement of educational leadership practices.

In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of considering the diverse perspectives and needs of aspiring and practicing school leaders in the design and implementation of professional development initiatives. By tailoring content and delivery methods to cater to the specific preferences and priorities of each group, professional learning opportunities can be more effective in fostering growth, enhancing skills, and ultimately improving educational outcomes.

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