

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS’
PERCEPTIONS OF PRINCIPAL’ S TRANSFORMATIONAL
LEADERSHIP STYLE AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NING’ ER VOCATIONAL
HIGH SCHOOL, YUNNAN, CHINA**

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of a principal’s transformational leadership style and teachers’ perceptions of professional development in Ning’er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China. There were three research objectives to guide this study: (1) to identify the teachers’ perceptions of the principal’s transformational leadership style, (2) to identify teachers’ perceptions of professional development, and (3) to determine the relationship between teachers’ perceptions of principal’s transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development in Ning’er vocational high school, Yunnan, China. This research design was a quantitative and relationship study. The data collection tool for this study was a questionnaire divided into two parts. A total of 60 full-time teachers in Ning’er Vocational High School replied to the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire adapted from Avolio and Bass (1995). Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professional Development Questionnaire was adapted from Lowden (2003). The first part of the questionnaire examines teachers’ perceptions of the principal’s transformational leadership style, and the second part examines their perceptions of professional development. This study found that teachers’ perceptions of principal’s transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development were high. There was a moderately positive relationship between teachers’ perception of principal leadership style and professional development.

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Introduction

Education plays an important role in society. Effective principals can maintain a high level of competence by building trust, establishing a structure to promote teachers' learning, connecting teachers with external experts, or helping teachers carry out internal reforms. And principal leadership can indirectly impact the school's efficiency through actions, and these actions could form the school's learning atmosphere (Hallinger, Bickman, and Davis, 1996). Meanwhile, a teacher plays a vital role in student learning; high qualified teachers are demanded. In the 21st century, the requirement of school learners will be much higher than before, while the requirements of schoolteachers are also more rigorous than before. All teachers should be professional in curriculum, teaching, assessment, and classroom management, and they must care and notice their students' learning and have higher requirements of their learning outcomes. Fullan (1993) stated that teachers' jobs are more complicated than before; they need more new knowledge and skill to help students. They must meet the requirements of a diverse and constantly increasing student population and higher demands of modern students; simultaneously, they must cater to the rapidly developing technology society. Teachers' professional development is essential to improve the quality of schools. The requirement to consider leadership with professional development can help school leaders understand the value of their school projects or activities, so they could adjust or add the resources necessary by teachers. The transformational leader must create, maintain, and promote a strong professional development program for the schoolteachers to keep up to date with modern pedagogy and 21st-century technology in the classroom. The selected school for this research has a particular mission to train students to meet the social needs of Chinese society.

Research Objectives

There are three objectives:

1. To identify the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style in Ning'er Vocational High School, Ning'er, Yunnan, China.
2. To identify the teachers' perceptions of professional development in Ning'er Vocational High School, Ning'er, Yunnan, China.
3. To determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development in Ning'er Vocational High School, Ning'er, Yunnan, China.

Research Hypothesis

There is a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development in Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership

Burns (1978) first identified the concept of transforming leadership in his descriptive research on political leaders. He mentioned that transforming leadership focuses more on organizational interactions, such as vision, culture, values, development, teamwork, and services make sense. Bass (1985) developed the concept of transformational leadership. He said that transformational leaders encourage their followers to transcend their self-interests to be beneficial for their team, organization, and society. Another researcher (Hay, 2006) added that transformational leadership paid more attention to organizational change with a new vision for the future based on trust and commitment. Bass broke this concept down into four factors, idealized influence intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and individualized motivation (1985).

Related Studies on Transformational Leadership

Peters and Decman (2014) found a correlation between transformational leadership and the supportive, engaged, and frustrating school climate elements.

And a study done by Balyer (2012) found that principals' transformational leadership behaviors have significant direct and indirect influences on teachers' commitment to change and their performance.

Gyeltshen (2019) studied the relationship between a principal's transformational leadership and Organizational Commitment from teachers' perceptions in a secondary school. And this study also found that there was a positive relationship between principals' transformational style and the organizational commitment of teachers in the selected school.

Professional Development

Guskey (2000) defined professional development as a process or activities developed to improve educators' skills, including their professional knowledge, skills, and attitude to improve students' achievement. In the education area, generally speaking, professional development is a process of improving and increasing the capabilities of people through some specific coaching and training such as further study to get higher academic degrees,

attending conferences or seminars, specific and professional projects, and some informal study opportunities. In the 21st century, lifelong learning is becoming a common concern in many countries worldwide (Harwell, 2003). High-quality professional learning is the foundation on which any improvement effort in education must build. By promoting teachers' professional development, it is helpful for student's achievement and the success of the school.

Related Studies on Professional Development

Meagher's (2011) dissertation focused on the relationships of teachers' professional development, teacher job satisfaction, and teacher working conditions in Illinois, USA. In this study, the researcher found that teachers responded that they enjoyed the professional development activity and learned more from the professional activity. And this researcher also found that there was a significant relationship between teacher professional development and teacher working conditions.

Meng (2018) completed a study on teachers' perceptions towards school professional development according to their demographic at an international school in Pracha Uthit, Bangkok. The finding of this study indicated that the overall level of teachers' perceptions towards their school's professional development was regarded as high. However, there were no significant differences in the teachers' perceptions towards the school's professional development according to their demographic factors.

Conceptual Framework

This study aimed to determine the teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership style and their perceptions of professional development in Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China. The researcher intended to determine whether there was a relationship between these two variables. The conceptual framework of this study was based on the research objectives of this study. The conceptual Framework was shown in Figure one, which was designed based on the theoretical framework. For the teachers' perceptions of the principal's leadership style, this researcher only focused on transformational leadership style based on Burns' (1978) Transformational Leadership theory; there were four factors: individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. For the teachers' perceptions of professional development based on Guskey (2000) professional development, there are five factors: participants' reactions, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes.

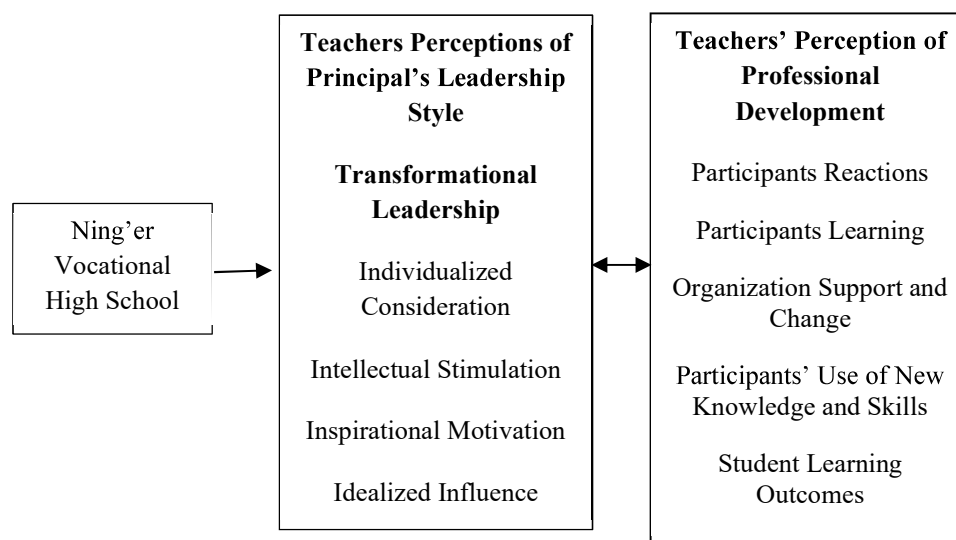


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Methodology

Research Design

This study was a quantitative study to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development in Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China. Means and standard deviations data analysis would be used to determine teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style and teachers' perceptions of professional development at selected schools. Pearson product moment correlation would be used to determine the relationship between these two variables in the selected school. The main targeted population of this research was 60 teachers from Ning'er vocational school during the academic year 2019-2020.

Instrumentation

The primary instrument for this study was a questionnaire. There were two parts to the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was to identify the teachers' perception towards the principal's transformational leadership styles, using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which was adapted from Avolio and Bass (1995). Furthermore, its reliability was attested by the previous authors Avolio and Bass (2004). It was at .87 of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The second part of the questionnaire was to identify the teachers' perception of their professional development. The instrument of this part was adopted from Lowden's (2003) study of *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Professional Development*, and its reliability was .67.

Collection of Data

After asking permission from the Ning'er vocational high school principal, the researcher collected data by distributing questionnaires (English and Chinese) languages to teachers in this school. The questionnaire was translated to Chinese by Real Learning Center & Translation Institute. A total of 60 questionnaires had been distributed, while all 60 were also returned, thus achieving a 100% return rate.

Findings/Results

The finding of this study was comprised of three objectives: 1) teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style; 2) teachers' perceptions of professional development; 3) the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and teachers' perceptions of professional development.

Objective One

Table 1. *Teachers' Perceptions of Principal's Transformational Leadership Style*

Principal Leadership Style	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Idealized Influence	3.63	.64	High
Intellectual Motivation	3.81	.64	High
Intellectual Stimulation	3.47	.65	Moderate
Individual Consideration	3.27	.73	Moderate
Total	3.57	.56	High

According to Table 1, the overall mean score of the teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style was 3.57, which was in the range of 3.51-4.50 of teacher's perceptions toward principals' transformational leadership style and was noted to be high. There were four elements of transformational leadership, and the research findings showed each of their total mean scores. And the mean score of four factors was: Idealized Influence was 3.63; Inspirational Motivation was 3.81; Intellectual Stimulation was 3.47, and Individualized Consideration was 3.27. It showed that principals in selected schools worked well with transformational leadership from teachers' perceptions.

The analysis showed that with regards to teacher's perceptions according to transformational leadership style, Idealized Influence (3.63), as well as Inspirational Motivation (3.81) were both high, which showed that the principal in this school focused on to inspire and motivate his teachers; at the same time, he also focused on being a model of his teachers to build confidence and trust. Despite this, Intellectual Stimulation (3.47) and Individual Consideration (3.27) were both Moderate, which showed that the

principal less focused on motivating his teachers to create and be innovative and less on noticing teachers' individual needs abilities, and desires.

Objective Two

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development

Professional Development	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Participants Reactions	3.68	.57	High
Participants Learning	3.87	.53	High
Organizational Support and Change	3.78	.55	High
Participants Use of New Knowledge	3.81	.48	High
Student Learning Outcomes	3.91	.45	High
Total	3.82	.41	High

Regarding Table 2, the overall mean score of the teachers' perceptions of professional development was 3.82, which was interpreted as high. And the mean score of five factors were: Participants Reactions was 3.68, Participants Learning was 3.87, Organizational Support and Change were 3.78, Participants Use of New Knowledge was 3.81, Student Learning Outcomes was 3.91. All functions within this dimension achieve a high interpretation according to the 5-point Likert Scale. This could mean that teachers' perceptions towards professional development were sufficiently serviced.

Objective Three

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Teachers' Perceptions Toward Principal Leadership Style and Professional Development (N=60)

		Professional Development	Conclusion
Teachers' perceptions towards Principal Leadership Style	Pearson Correlation Coefficient	.500**	There is a significant relationship.
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 3, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient r is .500 and Sig. is .000, which is smaller than 0.05; It showed that the relationship between teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and professional development was *moderately positive*.

Discussion

Teachers' Perceptions of Principal's Transformational Leadership Style

According to the study research findings, the total mean score of teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership style at Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China, was 3.57, which was interpreted as high. This indicated that teachers in Ning'er vocational high school view their principal's leadership style as transformational, and their perceptions were positive. The study of Caldwell and Spinks (1992) discussed that transformational leadership was an essential factor for school, school leaders and followers can reach higher outcomes; Since the teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership were high, it might mean that principals with transformational leadership were effective in this school. Bass (1988) stated that a transformational leader motivates and inspires his followers to achieve goals even to reach higher expectations.

The total mean score for Intellectual Stimulation was 3.47; Individualized Consideration was 3.27, considered moderate on the interpretation scale. Intellectual Stimulation meant that leaders create new ideas in solving the problem (Rowe & Guerrero, 2011). Individualized Consideration meant that leaders cared about each follower, paid attention to individual needs, abilities, and desires, patiently listened to their words, and trained and led each follower according to each of the different conditions and needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Regarding the finding of the study, teachers' perceptions of these two dimensions were moderate, which showed that the principal might less focus on teachers' individual needs and encourage his teachers to be creative. The principal might need to improve their relevant abilities to promote their school management.

Teachers' Perceptions of Professional Development

The total mean score of teachers' perceptions of principals' professional development at Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, China, was 3.82, which was in the range of 3.51-4.50 of teachers' perceptions of professional development this was identified as being high. And teachers in Ning'er vocational high school had a positive attitude to professional development, which indicated that they understand the importance of professional development. Guskey (2000) mentioned that every educational reform should focus on the qualified professional concerned. According to a previous study, professional development also helped teachers improve their knowledge and practice of skills (Blazer, 2014). In this study, the highest dimension was Student Learning Outcomes which mean score was 3.91. It indicated that teachers who join in professional development could improve school quality and students' achievement. These schoolteachers had positive perceptions

towards professional development, and it is beneficial to not only the school but also themselves.

Relationship Between the Teachers' Perceptions towards Principal Transformational Leadership Style and Professional Development

The result of the third objective showed a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of the principal's transformational leadership style and professional development, and the relationship between the two variables was moderately positive. According to the previous research finding by McCarley, Peters, and Decman (2014), they mentioned a correlation between transformational leadership and school climate. Also, they mentioned that there was a relationship between transformational leadership and school climate indicator of an 'engaged' teacher. And Balyer's (2012) study also mentioned that principals' transformational leadership behaviors had significant direct and indirect influences on teachers' commitment to change and performance. Meanwhile, Meagher's (2011) study also discussed a significant relationship between teachers' perceptions of professional development and their working conditions. It can assume transformational leaders could affect the teachers' professional development. The current results of the study illustrated that the principal's transformational leadership style and teachers' professional development play not only imperative parts in schools, but they were correlated to each other in educational management work. And teachers' professional development should be considered in the school planning for sustainable school development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, teachers' perceptions of principal's transformational leadership style and their perceptions of professional development were both high. This research had shown that there was a significant and moderately positive relationship between the teachers' perceptions of principals' transformational leadership style and the teachers' perceptions of professional development at Ning'er Vocational High School, Yunnan, in China during the academic year of 2019-2020. Principal with transformational leadership was effective in this school. However, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration also needed to be considered more into his work. Teachers' perceptions of professional development in this school were high; it indicated that teachers in this school had a positive attitude toward school professional development and following outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for the School Principal at Ning'er Vocational High School

The researcher would recommend that the school principal develop his ability to be more considerate towards teachers and stimulate teachers in areas of intellectual development, such as in areas of re-examining critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate, improve his balance of views with different perspectives.

Recommendations for the School Administrators at Ning'er Vocational High School

The researcher would recommend that school administrators put in place appropriate measures that are both support by and assist in developing the appropriate transformational leadership style functions and professional development domains.

Recommendations for the School Teachers at Ning'er Vocational High School

The researcher would recommend schoolteachers assist the principal in this responsibility by ensuring that the principal continues to undertake his roles professionally and according to the edicts placed on him by the school administration team. Therefore, teachers are recommended to be a check and balance. Teachers are also recommended to ensure that they engage more with the principal to ensure that communication and opportunities of Intellectual Stimulation and Individual Consideration are maximized. Thus, allowing the school principal to develop these two areas that are currently lacking.

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