

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF PRIMARY SCHOOL UNDER THE DOUBLE REDUCTION POLICY IN KUNMING, YUNNAN PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

Against the background of China's Double Reduction Policy launched in July 2021, basic education is undergoing profound structural transformation from traditional examination-oriented mode to quality-oriented holistic development. Assessment reform has become the core task of primary education governance, and primary school principals' transformational leadership plays a decisive role in policy implementation and school instructional innovation. This study adopts questionnaire survey and in-depth interview methods, taking primary school teachers in Kunming as research subjects and selecting teachers from Fangcaodi International School as key interview informants. Based on the four dimensions of idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, this paper explores the current development level and practical performance of primary school principals' transformational leadership in Kunming. The findings show that the overall transformational leadership is at a high level; inspirational motivation ranks first, followed by idealized influence and individualized consideration, while intellectual stimulation is the relatively weak dimension. Interview results further reflect that principals perform well in moral demonstration and policy vision guidance, but lack adequate support for teachers' teaching evaluation innovation and personalized professional growth. On this basis, this paper summarizes practical dilemmas and puts forward targeted implementation guidelines, aiming to provide empirical reference and practical path for primary school leadership construction and assessment reform under the Double Reduction Policy in Kunming.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Primary School, Double Reduction Policy, Kunming City

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, China's basic education has stepped into a new stage of quality-oriented development and governance modernization. For a long time, primary education has been deeply influenced by examination-oriented tradition, with academic scores as the core evaluation standard. This mode leads to excessive academic pressure on students, continuous expansion of off-campus tutoring institutions, rising family education costs and growing educational inequality. Before the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy, the disorderly development of shadow education intensified educational involution and brought multiple hidden troubles to the physical and mental health of primary school students.

Issued in July 2021, the Double Reduction Policy aims to reduce students' excessive homework burden and standardize for-profit off-campus tutoring, return the dominant position of teaching to schools, and promote the fundamental reform of teaching evaluation and classroom teaching mode. The policy is not only a simple adjustment of learning tasks, but a systematic reform covering teaching concept, evaluation mechanism, school management and teacher development. Under the policy background, traditional result-oriented evaluation can no longer meet the requirements of holistic student development, and it is urgent to promote the transformation to process-oriented, developmental and diversified assessment.

In the process of policy landing and evaluation reform, school leadership is the key influencing factor. Transformational leadership can effectively help schools resolve reform pressure, shape shared educational vision, stimulate teachers' internal motivation, and promote the substantive implementation of assessment reform. As the capital of Yunnan Province, Kunming presents the characteristics of urban-rural integration, unbalanced educational resources and diverse school development conditions. Its regional educational context has unique research value. At present, empirical research on transformational leadership combined with the Double Reduction Policy in Kunming is still insufficient. Therefore, this study focuses on local primary schools, explores the current situation and deficiencies of principals' transformational leadership, so as to provide theoretical and practical support for regional basic education reform.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH SCOPE

Research Objectives

This study proposes two core research objectives. First, to analyze the overall level and dimensional differences of primary school principals' transformational leadership in Kunming under the background of the Double Reduction Policy. Second, to formulate feasible guidelines for principals' transformational leadership to better promote assessment reform and sustainable policy implementation.

Research Scope

In terms of content scope, this study takes primary school principals' transformational leadership as the independent variable and assessment reform under the Double Reduction Policy as the dependent variable. Transformational leadership is divided into four recognized dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Assessment reform refers to the transformation from single score ranking to developmental, process-oriented and multi-dimensional comprehensive evaluation.

In terms of regional scope, the research is carried out in primary schools of Kunming, covering urban and suburban schools with different resource endowments, which can truly reflect the local policy implementation environment. In terms of research objects, the population is all primary school teachers in Kunming; questionnaire samples are selected according to scientific sampling standards, and 5 teachers from Fangcaodi International School are selected for targeted interview by purposive sampling.

Expected Research Benefits

Theoretically, this study enriches the applied research of transformational leadership in China's primary education reform, makes up the research gap in Yunnan regional context, and builds the theoretical connection between transformational leadership and Double Reduction policy implementation. Practically, the research conclusions can provide specific operational guidance for primary school principals to adjust leadership behaviors, motivate teachers to participate in evaluation reform and optimize school internal management. Socially, the research can provide empirical basis for educational administrative departments to promote policy implementation, optimize resource allocation and guide rational educational expectation of the public.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept and Theoretical Connotation of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory was originated by Burns and further perfected by Bass, and has become one of the most influential theoretical paradigms in educational administration. It emphasizes that leaders shape shared values, inspire followers' higher-level motivation, and realize common organizational goals beyond simple interest exchange. The four core dimensions are widely adopted in educational research.

Idealized influence means principals possess high moral standards and professional integrity, set professional role models, and win teachers' trust and respect by adhering to educational public welfare values. Inspirational motivation refers to principals putting forward clear educational vision and reform goals, conveying high professional expectations, and stimulating teachers' sense of mission and enthusiasm for participating in educational reform. Intellectual stimulation embodies leaders' encouragement to teachers to reflect on traditional teaching norms, break inertial thinking, and explore innovative teaching and evaluation methods. Individualized consideration reflects leaders' attention to teachers' different growth backgrounds, professional needs and work pressure, providing personalized guidance and emotional support.

Existing studies have shown that transform leadership can effectively shape positive school culture, enhance teachers' organizational commitment, and promote teacher collaboration and instructional innovation. In Chinese educational system with hierarchical governance characteristics, transformational leadership presents localized characteristics affected by institutional environment and cultural tradition.

Research on Double Reduction Policy and Assessment reform

The Double Reduction Policy is a landmark institutional reform in China's compulsory education governance. Its core orientation is to reduce academic burden, improve classroom teaching quality and promote educational equity. The policy forces primary schools to abandon the single evaluation mode dominated by test scores, and reconstruct diversified evaluation system focusing on students' comprehensive literacy and learning process.

In the actual implementation, assessment reform faces many difficulties, including teachers' long-term formed exam-oriented inertia, parents' persistent pursuit of academic scores, and insufficient school supporting conditions. Many schools only stay in superficial compliance rather than substantive transformation. Relevant studies have pointed out that school principals' leadership is the key to break the reform deadlock and promote the deep advancement of evaluation transformation.

Domestic and International Research Status

International researches on transformational leadership start early and have formed a complete system. Scholars generally confirm that transformational leadership is highly adapted to the organizational characteristics of schools, and can effectively bridge macro policy and classroom practice, resolve reform resistance and promote school sustainable development.

Domestic researches on transformational leadership are increasing year by year. After the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy, more scholars began to pay attention to the value

of school leadership. However, most empirical studies are concentrated in eastern and central developed regions, while there are few targeted studies on Kunming and southwest China. Relevant researches also lack the combination of quantitative investigation and qualitative interview, and cannot fully reflect the real situation of regional primary school leadership practice. This study fills the above research gaps.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a mixed research method combining quantitative questionnaire survey and qualitative semi-structured interview. Quantitative survey is used to grasp the overall level and dimensional difference of transformational leadership; qualitative interview is used to deeply analyze practical performance, existing problems and internal influencing factors, so as to ensure the comprehensiveness and authenticity of research conclusions.

Population and Sample

The research population is primary school teachers in Kunming. According to Krejcie & Morgan sampling standard, reasonable sample quantity is determined, and 107 valid questionnaires are finally recovered, covering teachers of different gender, age, educational background, teaching experience and staffing status. For qualitative research, 5 teachers from Fangcaodi International School are selected as key interviewees, including administrative management staff, grade leaders, subject teachers and young teachers, with typical representation.

Research Instruments

The self-designed questionnaire consists of two parts: basic personal information and transformational leadership scale. The scale includes 4 dimensions with 10 items for each dimension, adopting 5-point Likert scoring. After expert demonstration, all item IOC values are between 0.67 and 1.00; the overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient is 0.9166, which proves good reliability and validity.

The semi-structured interview outline is designed around four dimensions of transformational leadership, focusing on principals' specific performance in policy interpretation, moral demonstration, teaching innovation guidance and personalized teacher care, so as to collect real perceptual experience and practical cases from front-line teachers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Questionnaires are distributed online and offline. After sorting valid samples, frequency, percentage, mean value and standard deviation are used for quantitative statistical analysis. One-on-one in-depth interviews are conducted with the consent of interviewees, with synchronous recording and note-taking. After sorting interview texts, content thematic analysis is adopted to summarize common viewpoints and practical dilemmas.

RESEARCH RESULTS

Basic Information of Respondents

Most respondents are female teachers, which conforms to the gender distribution characteristics of primary schools. The age structure is mainly young and middle-aged teachers aged 31–40. Most teachers have bachelor's degree as the highest academic qualification. In terms of teaching experience, teachers with less than 5 years account for a relatively high proportion, and the faculty includes both tenured and contract-based teachers, reflecting the real staffing situation of local primary schools.

Overall Level of Transformational Leadership

The overall average score of primary school principals' transformational leadership in Kunming is at a high level. Among the four dimensions, inspirational motivation ranks the first, followed by idealized influence and individualized consideration; intellectual stimulation ranks the last with the largest discrete degree, which is the obvious weak link in current leadership practice.

Dimensional Performance Analysis

In the dimension of idealized influence, principals maintain good professional ethics and moral literacy. In the implementation of the Double Reduction Policy, they take the lead in abiding by policy norms, adhere to educational public welfare orientation, properly mediate conflicts between parents and schools, and set good professional examples for teachers, with all indicators maintaining a high level.

Inspirational motivation is the most prominent dimension. Principals can accurately interpret the connotation of the Double Reduction Policy, clarify the vision and goal of assessment reform, convey high professional expectations to teachers, and maintain positive organizational atmosphere and teachers' reform enthusiasm when facing workload increase and parental misunderstanding.

Intellectual stimulation is the weakest dimension. Although principals advocate teachers to reflect on traditional evaluation norms, they lack systematic arrangement of teaching research activities, insufficient support for innovative homework design and diversified evaluation practice, and fail to build a tolerant atmosphere for teachers' trial and error in teaching innovation.

Individualized consideration keeps a high level on the whole. Principals pay attention to teachers' professional well-being and individual contributions, and build a harmonious working atmosphere. But in personalized coaching, targeted training and absorbing teachers' practical suggestions, the performance is relatively insufficient, and refined humanistic management needs to be improved.

Interview Comprehensive Analysis

According to the interview content, local principals have strong policy awareness and professional sense of responsibility, can earnestly implement the Double Reduction requirements, convey reform concepts through regular meetings, and coordinate the balance between school teaching and parental expectations. However, teachers generally reflect that principals pay more attention to daily administrative management and policy compliance, while insufficient attention is paid to guiding teaching evaluation innovation and organizing professional teaching research. Restricted by traditional educational concepts and unbalanced regional educational resources, the actual effect of transformational leadership is also constrained objectively.

DISCUSSION

The overall high level of transformational leadership in Kunming primary schools benefits from the standardized promotion of the Double Reduction Policy. As the direct implementers of national policy at the school level, principals have formed mature behavioral norms in policy publicity, moral demonstration and vision inspiration, so inspirational motivation and idealized influence perform prominently.

The relative weakness of intellectual stimulation reflects the common practical dilemma of current primary school principals. Most principals have rich administrative coordination experience, but lack professional accumulation in curriculum evaluation and teaching research guidance. They are good at daily operation management, but insufficient in stimulating teachers' innovative thinking and guiding in-depth reform practice.

Individualized consideration is at the middle and high level, which indicates that principals have basic care for teachers' work status, but affected by traditional standardized management mode, they lack differentiated arrangement and personalized support for teachers with different ages and growth stages, and the humanistic temperature of leadership needs to be further enhanced.

In addition, the implementation effect of transformational leadership is restricted by regional objective conditions. The urban-rural educational gap, solid parental exam-oriented concept and uneven teacher professional level all increase the difficulty of reform promotion, making the leadership performance of different schools present obvious differences.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Conclusion

The overall transformational leadership level of primary school principals in Kunming under the Double Reduction Policy is high. Inspirational motivation performs best, followed by idealized influence and individualized consideration, while intellectual stimulation is the prominent short board. Principals have outstanding performance in moral role modeling and policy vision guidance, but are insufficient in stimulating teachers' teaching innovation, organizing teaching research activities and providing personalized professional support. The main restricting factors include deep-rooted examination-oriented concept, insufficient principals' instructional leadership ability, unbalanced urban-rural educational resources and persistent parental educational expectation pressure.

Practical Guidelines for Transformational Leadership

Firstly, consolidate idealized influence. Principals should always adhere to the public welfare attribute of basic education, maintain professional integrity in policy implementation, set an example for teachers, and patiently guide parents to establish rational educational concepts, so as to create a good internal and external environment for reform.

Secondly, strengthen inspirational motivation. Principals should further clarify the long-term value of assessment reform, consolidate shared school development vision, release positive guidance in the face of reform difficulties, and always maintain teachers' sense of identity and enthusiasm for participation.

Thirdly, make up the weakness of intellectual stimulation. Principals should attach importance to the improvement of instructional leadership, regularly organize teaching research seminars, encourage teachers to explore formative evaluation and process-oriented assessment methods, and build an inclusive school atmosphere conducive to teaching innovation.

Fourth, optimize individualized consideration. Carry out differentiated management according to teachers' working experience and professional characteristics, provide targeted mentoring and professional training, fully listen to teachers' practical suggestions in reform decision-making, and pay attention to relieving teachers' work pressure under the Double Reduction Policy.

Research Limitations

This study only selects partial primary schools in Kunming as samples, lacking sufficient coverage of remote rural and ethnic township schools. Besides, it adopts cross-sectional research design without longitudinal tracking of leadership evolution and reform effect. Subsequent research can expand the sample scope and adopt longitudinal investigation to further enrich relevant research achievements.

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