

# The Influence of Transformational Leadership of Higher Education Institution (Hei) Administrators on Teachers' Performance in China

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**Abstract:** Higher education leaders (HEI) are the college directors, deans, department chairpersons, and program coordinators. Over time, the roles and functions of academic administrators have changed significantly. This study investigated the influence of the HEI administrators' transformational leadership on teachers' performance in China and contributed to the limited studies on these variables in the context of HEI in China. Guided by the theory of transformational leadership, this study was designed using a quantitative descriptive correlational research approach. Through the participation of 314 HEI faculty, the results revealed that the overall assessment of transformational leadership qualities is evident, but the overall performance of teachers is rated as average. And among the predictors of transformational leadership, only the empowering variable has a positive influence on the assessment of teachers' performance.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Institutions in China; Influence of Administrators on Teachers' Performance; Transformational Leadership.

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## 1. Introduction

Leadership plays a vital role in the complicated and dynamic context of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). It is through leadership that the successful attainment of HEI goals is determined. When good leadership is set on HEIs, it becomes evident all throughout the institution. However, the idea of good leadership will only occur if those ideas are communicated to the members which will enable them to act as the leader wants them to (Satyendra, 2015).

Commonly HEI leaders are the college directors, deans, department chairpersons, and program coordinators. They are overseeing both the faculty and the students aside from the administrative work assigned to them. Over time, the roles and functions of academic administrators have changed significantly. Now, they are also expected to lead and initiate outreach programs, faculty development, public relations, and industry partners. Consistently, HEI administrators are increasingly being devoted to the management of the growing business operations of academic units such as web presence, computing and information systems, service units, and facility maintenance (Miller et al., 2016).

These changing and increasing roles of HEI administrators require transformational leadership – it emphasizes the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers. Transformational leadership manifests inspirational motivation, development and maintenance of social and professional networks among leaders, which result in increased performance and active participation of their subordinates. Transformational leaders encourage and influence their followers toward self-realization, which makes them satisfied with their careers because they feel competent, determined and purposeful at work (Heyliger & Heyliger, 2014).

Transformational leadership is founded by the following four pillars which were established by Avolio and Bass (2002 as cited in Haibo, 2022). First, idealized influence – transformative leaders mentor their followers to take on those

responsibilities themselves with a sense of purpose, meaning, self-esteem, self-determination, emotional control, and confidence.

The second pillar is inspirational motivation. Transformational leaders succeed with their staff because these leaders provide opportunities for their followers to raise their consciousness aligned with the company's mission and vision.

Third pillar is the intellectual stimulation. Leaders who provide intellectual stimulation make their followers genuinely feel excited and enthusiastic about their work.

Lastly, individualized consideration is present among transformational leaders when they are understanding the individual uniqueness and appreciating their unique contributions to the workplace.

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Over the past decade, HEIs in China have undergone a successful period of transition and transformation to conform with the changing landscape of HEIs that affected their hiring and recruitment of sage professionals who could effectively implement change initiatives and lead faculty, staff, and students efficiently along with the pressures of securing, maintain and retain their position. These are some of the challenges that both HEIs and their leaders face and studies recommend they increase their standards of job satisfaction and commitment by considering their stakeholders' needs (Haibo, 2022).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of the HEI administrators' transformational leadership on teachers' performance in China. This study contributed to the limited studies on these variables in the context of HEI in China. Furthermore, the results of the study identified areas in transformational leadership of HEI administrators that need to be increased for stronger influence on HEI teachers' performance.

## 1.2. Hypotheses

There was no significant influence of transformational leadership traits of HEI leaders on the teachers' performance.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1. Sampling Method

The population for this study consisted of HEI faculty from five (5) universities in Henan, China, namely Henan University of Science and Technology, Henan Normal University, Luoyang Normal College, Luoyang Institute of Technology, and Luoyang Vocational and Technical College.

### 2.2. Research Instrument

To answer the research questions, the research tool was adopted from the Survey of Transformational Leadership (STL) developed and tested by Bass and Avolio (1994) and utilized by Edwards et al. (2010 as cited in Robinson, 2023). It was developed to evaluate the leadership of directors or administrators. The STL is proposed to be used for this research because of the design, which was explicitly used to assess the factors of TL behaviors of leaders.

### 2.3. Statistical Treatment of the Data

The research was designed to conduct a descriptive comparative correlational method to examine the relationship

among idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and empowering.

In this study, the descriptive statistics to show the disparities in the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the correlational method was used to analyze and identify relationships between the assessment of transformational leadership and the profile of respondents in research.

## 3. Results, Analysis, and Interpretation

This chapter displays the data in a structured tabular manner and offers a thorough explanation and analysis of the material. The conclusions in this section are based on a statistical analysis performed using Jamovi 2.3.28.

The Shapiro-Wilk test, a statistical procedure designed to assess normality, was utilized to determine the appropriateness of the parametric test for the research objectives. Parametric testing was utilized when the p-value surpassed 0.05. When p-values fall below 0.05, it prompts inquiries about the data's conformity to a uniform distribution. As a result, non-parametric testing was utilized.

### Assessment of the HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of HEI Leaders

#### 3.1. Idealized Influence

**Table 1.** Assessment of HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of their HEI Leaders in Terms of Idealized Influence on Integrity

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The department head ...				
1. shows determination on the job.	3.30	0.65	Evident	12
2. does not display honesty.	1.91	0.86	Less Evident	13
3. is approachable.	3.41	0.65	Evident	5
4. considers the ethical implications of actions.	3.48	0.57	Evident	1
5. expresses values shared by program staff members.	3.37	0.63	Evident	9
6. encourages staff behaviors consistent with the values shared by all members.	3.40	0.64	Evident	6.5
7. acts consistently with values shared by program staff members.	3.36	0.64	Evident	10
8. keeps commitments.	3.42	0.59	Evident	4
9. is trustworthy.	3.39	0.64	Evident	8
10. behaves in ways that strengthens respect from staff members.	3.44	0.60	Evident	2
11. is someone that staff members are proud to be associated with.	3.33	0.67	Evident	11
12. models behaviors other staff are asked to perform.	3.40	0.64	Evident	6.5
13. shows self-confidence.	3.43	0.59	Evident	3
<b>COMPOSITE MEAN</b>	<b>3.28</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>Evident</b>	

*Legend: 1.00-1.50: Not Evident at All (Very Low); 1.51-2.50: Less Evident (Low); 2.51-3.50; Evident (Average); 3.51-4.00: Highly Evident (High)*

Table 1 presents an evaluation of higher education institution faculty regarding the transformational leadership of their leaders, specifically focusing on idealized impact related to integrity. The tabulated data yielded a composite mean score of 3.28 and a standard deviation of 0.47, indicating an average rating. This indicated their consensus that the department head acknowledges the ethical ramifications of activities (M = 3.48), conducts oneself in a manner that enhances respect from personnel (M = 3.44) and demonstrates self-assurance (M = 3.43). In other words, there is a general agreement among staff that the department head

is aware of the ethical implications of their actions and decisions. It suggests that the head behaves in a way that earns the respect of the staff and shows confidence in their role. Overall, it highlights the leader's commitment to ethical conduct, respectfulness, and assuredness, which positively influences the department's culture.

On the other hand, they disagree that their department head does not display honesty (M = 1.91). This finding was explained further based on the Chinese culture, which often prioritizes maintaining harmony and face, which may lead individuals to avoid openly criticizing leaders, even if there

are concerns about honesty.

### 3.2. Intellectual Stimulation

**Table 2.** Assessment of HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of their HEI Leaders in terms of Intellectual Stimulation on Encourages Innovation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The department head ...				
1. attempts to improve the program by taking a new approach to business as usual.	3.29	0.69	Evident	8
2. positively acknowledges creative solutions to problems.	3.34	0.66	Evident	2
3. encourages ideas other than own.	3.33	0.66	Evident	4
4. is respectful in handling staff member mistakes.	3.30	0.66	Evident	7
5. encourages staff to try new ways to accomplish their work.	3.36	0.63	Evident	1
6. suggests new ways of getting tasks completed.	3.33	0.65	Evident	4
7. asks questions that stimulate staff members to consider ways to improve their work performance.	3.32	0.64	Evident	6
8. does not criticize program members' ideas even when different from own.	3.33	0.65	Evident	4
<b>COMPOSITE MEAN</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>Evident</b>	

*Legend: 1.00-1.50: Not Evident at All (Very Low); 1.51-2.50: Less Evident (Low); 2.51-3.50; Evident (Average); 3.51-4.00: Highly Evident (High)*

### 3.3. Inspirational Motivation

**Table 3.** Assessment of HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of their HEI Leaders in terms of Inspirational Motivation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The department head ...				
1. makes staff aware of the need for change in the program.	3.27	0.66	Evident	24
2. conveys hope about the future of the program.	3.38	0.59	Evident	2
3. communicates program needs.	3.36	0.59	Evident	8
4. identifies program weaknesses.	3.33	0.64	Evident	18.5
5. considers staff needs when setting new program goals.	3.30	0.67	Evident	22
6. encourages staff feedback in choosing new program goals.	3.36	0.67	Evident	8
7. develops new program goals.	3.33	0.64	Evident	18.5
8. talks about goals for the future of the program.	3.30	0.66	Evident	
9. displays enthusiasm about pursuing program goals	3.39	0.63	Evident	1
10. uses metaphors and/or visual tools to convey program goals.	3.28	0.72	Evident	23
11. displays confidence that program goals will be achieved.	3.36	0.61	Evident	8
12. expresses a clear vision for the future of the program.	3.36	0.64	Evident	8
13. clearly defines the steps needed to reach program goals.	3.32	0.64	Evident	20
14. sets attainable objectives for reaching program goals.	3.35	0.62	Evident	14.5
15. helps staff members see how their own goals can be reached by pursuing program goals.	3.36	0.67	Evident	8
16. demonstrates tasks aimed at fulfilling program goals.	3.36	0.66	Evident	8
17. allocates resources toward program goals.	3.31	0.68	Evident	21
18. obtains staff assistance in reaching program goals.	3.35	0.63	Evident	14.5
19. secures support from outside the program when needed to reach program goals.	3.35	0.64	Evident	14.5
20. promotes teamwork in reaching program goals.	3.36	0.63	Evident	8
21. expresses confidence in staff members' collective ability to reach program goals.	3.35	0.65	Evident	14.5
22. prepares for challenges that may result from changes in the program.	3.36	0.63	Evident	8
23. encourages staff to share suggestions in how new program goals will be implemented.	3.36	0.62	Evident	8
24. behaves consistently with program goals.	3.37	0.61	Evident	3
<b>COMPOSITE MEAN</b>	<b>3.34</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>Evident</b>	

*Legend: 1.00-1.50: Not Evident at All (Very Low); 1.51-2.50: Less Evident (Low); 2.51-3.50; Evident (Average); 3.51-4.00: Highly Evident (High)*

Table 2 highlights HEI faculty evaluations of their HEI leaders' transformational leadership about intellectual stimulation that fosters creativity, yielding a composite mean score of 3.33 and a standard deviation of 0.59. The research revealed that HEI educators concurred that their department head promotes innovative approaches to work (M = 3.36), positively recognizes creative problem-solving (M = 3.34), and refrains from criticizing program members' views, even when divergent from their own (M = 3.33). These results purported that their department heads actively promote and supports innovative approaches to work. They consistently acknowledge and appreciate creative problem-solving and refrains from criticizing program members' views, even when those views diverge from their own.

Specifically, the examination of their responses indicated that item number 5 yielded the greatest mean score of 3.36, which means that their department heads encourage staff to explore new methods for completing their work. Positively, the result demonstrated that in a rapidly evolving educational landscape, embracing new methods helps departments stay competitive and responsive to changes in student needs, technology, and industry standards.

Table 3 presents the teachers' assessment of their leaders' transformational leadership in terms of inspirational motivation, resulting in a composite mean score of 3.34 and a standard deviation of 0.56. The data revealed that they have an average rating for these variables, affirming that their department head demonstrates excitement for achieving program objectives (M = 3.39), expresses optimism for the program's future (M = 3.38), and acts in alignment with program goals (M = 3.37). This result showed that when

department heads communicate a clear and compelling vision for the program, teachers are more likely to feel aligned with its goals and objectives. Likewise, when the department head's actions consistently reflect program goals, it reinforces trust and confidence among teachers that leadership is genuinely invested in achieving those objectives. Thus, an enthusiastic and optimistic department head can motivate teachers, creating a positive environment that encourages engagement and commitment to the program's success.

Their responses highlighted item number 9 which attained the greatest mean score of 3.39, which means that their department head is enthusiastic about pursuing the program goals. Shirk (2020) observed that an enthusiastic department head can significantly boost teachers' motivation and morale, fostering a more dynamic and engaged work environment. An enthusiastic leader typically creates a supportive atmosphere, encouraging collaboration and open communication among staff, which can enhance teamwork. Therefore, when department heads express enthusiasm, it helps build trust and stronger relationships within the department, fostering a sense of community.

Whereas, item number 1 (the department head informs workers of the necessity for change in the program) recorded the lowest mean score of 3.27. This result demonstrated the teachers' feeling that the department head has not provided adequate justification or data to demonstrate why change is necessary, leading to resistance. If the department head does not communicate clearly or frequently about the reasons for change, teachers may feel uninformed and skeptical.

### 3.4. Individualized Consideration

**Table 4.** Assessment of HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of their HEI Leaders in terms of Individualized Consideration on Respects Others

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The department head ...				
1. treats staff members as individuals, rather than as a collective group.	3.21	0.73	Evident	2
2. treats individual staff members with dignity and respect.	3.39	0.61	Evident	1
3. does not respect individual staff members' personal feelings.	2.11	0.99	Less Evident	3
<b>COMPOSITE MEAN</b>	<b>2.90</b>	<b>0.52</b>	<b>Evident</b>	

*Legend: 1.00-1.50: Not Evident at All (Very Low); 1.51-2.50: Less Evident (Low); 2.51-3.50; Evident (Average); 3.51-4.00: Highly Evident (High)*

Table 4 displays a teacher's assessment of their superiors' transformational leadership in providing personalized care for others. The data table reveals a mean score of 2.90 with a minimal degree of variability, indicated by a standard deviation of 0.52. Instructors agreed that their department head respects individual staff members with dignity and respect (M = 3.39) and recognizes staff members as individuals rather than as a collective entity (M = 3.21). These results showed that instructors may perceive the department head as culturally aware and sensitive, particularly in a diverse environment, which enhances feelings of respect. Baba et al. (2021) observed that consistent respectful behavior builds trust, leading instructors to feel valued as individuals rather than just part of a collective group. The department head may take the time to engage with staff

members personally, showing genuine interest in their ideas, concerns, and contributions. By acknowledging the unique strengths and talents of each staff member, the department head fosters an environment where individuals feel valued for their specific skills.

Conversely, they said that their department head lacks respect for the personal feelings of individual staff members (M = 2.11). For this reason, faculty members often reported lower levels of job satisfaction when they felt disrespected or undervalued, leading to decreased motivation and engagement. They performed decreased productivity, as they disengaged from their work and developed a weaker commitment to the organization, feeling less invested in its goals and objectives when personal feelings are disregarded (Hu & Du, 2022).

### 3.5. Empowering

**Table 5.** Assessment of HEI Faculty on the Transformational Leadership of their HEI Leaders in terms of Empowering on Task Delegation

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
The department head ...				
1. provides opportunities for staff to participate in making decisions that affect the program.	3.28	0.64	Evident	14.5
2. provides opportunities for staff members to take primary responsibility over tasks.	3.30	0.62	Evident	11.5
3. delegates tasks that provide encouragement to staff members.	3.32	0.62	Evident	9.5
4. delegates tasks that build up the organization.	3.33	0.63	Evident	8
5. assigns tasks based on staff members' interests.	3.29	0.65	Evident	13
6. enables staff to make decisions, within contractual guidelines, on how they get their work done.	3.28	0.66	Evident	14.5
7. follows delegation of a task with support and encouragement.	3.38	0.63	Evident	2.5
8. sees that authority is granted to staff in order to get tasks completed.	3.35	0.62	Evident	5
9. provides requested support for task completion.	3.34	0.60	Evident	7
10. provides requested support for task completion.	3.32	0.63	Evident	9.5
11. allocates adequate resources to see tasks are completed.	3.35	0.63	Evident	5
12. provides information necessary for task completion.	3.35	0.62	Evident	5
13. provides feedback on progress toward completing a task.	3.39	0.61	Evident	1
14. conveys confidence in staff members' ability to accomplish tasks.	3.38	0.62	Evident	2.5
15. helps staff members set attainable goals to accomplish work tasks.	3.30	0.59	Evident	11.5
<b>COMPOSITE MEAN</b>	<b>3.33</b>	<b>0.56</b>	<b>Evident</b>	

*Legend: 1.00-1.50: Not Evident at All (Very Low); 1.51-2.50: Less Evident (Low); 2.51-3.50; Evident (Average); 3.51-4.00: Highly Evident (High)*

Table 5 presents the teachers' assessment of their leaders' transformational leadership regarding the empowerment of on-task delegation. The table indicates a mean score of 3.33, with minimal variability, shown by a standard deviation of 0.56. This implied that the educators agreed that their department head offers feedback on task completion progress ( $M = 3.39$ ), provides support and encouragement following work delegation ( $M = 3.38$ ), and expresses trust in the staff's capability to complete duties ( $M = 3.38$ ).

Item number 13 attained the highest mean score of 3.39, as reflected in the responses. This showed that teachers observed that their department head provides feedback on their progress toward completing a task. Similarly, findings revealed that documentation of regular performance evaluations includes specific feedback on teachers' progress and areas for improvement. Written reports or summaries from classroom observations where the department head provides constructive feedback on teaching practices and student engagement. Even records of scheduled meetings where the department head discusses progress with individual teachers, offering insights and guidance (Sato, 2017).

In contrast, items 1 (The department head facilitates staff involvement in decision-making regarding program impact) and 6 (empowers staff to make decisions, within contractual parameters, about their task execution) earned the lowest mean score of 3.28. These results communicated the teachers' sentiments on a top-down management style that may prevent meaningful staff participation, leading to perceptions that

decisions are made without input from teachers. Insufficient communication about decision-making processes can leave staff feeling excluded or unaware of opportunities to contribute. In the study of Meng (2022), it was found that the staff may feel unprepared or lack the skills needed to engage effectively in decision-making processes, leading to disengagement. A perceived lack of support from the department head in facilitating discussions can contribute to feelings of disempowerment.

#### **Influence of Transformational Leadership Traits of HEI Leaders on the Teachers' Performance**

The model fit measures of multiple regression analysis generated a p-value that is lower than the 0.05 level of significance, implying that there is a predictor in the model. Among the predictors, only the empowering ( $p = 0.016$ ) variable has a positive influence on the assessment of teachers' performance. The model has a beta coefficient of 0.23, indicating that for every 1-unit increase in empowerment, there is a 0.23-point increase in the outcome variable. The variation in the assessment of teachers' performance can be attributed to the predictor for 40%, and the remaining 60% can be attributed to other variables that are not included in the study.

These results suggest that leaders who empower teachers prioritize their professional growth. By providing opportunities for training and development, they equip teachers with new skills and innovative teaching methods, directly impacting student engagement and learning

outcomes. Empowering traits of transformational leadership include granting teachers' autonomy in their decision-making. This trust fosters a sense of ownership over their work, leading to increased creativity and motivation in the classroom. Overall, transformational leadership that

emphasizes empowerment contributes to a positive school culture, enhances teacher morale, and ultimately leads to improved teaching performance and better student outcomes in China.

**Table 6.** Model Fit Measures

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Overall Model Test			
				F	df1	df2	p
1	0.64	0.41	0.40	42.37	5	308	< .001
Model Coefficients - Performance of Teachers							
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p			
Constant	1.64	0.14	11.79	< .001			
Idealized Influence	0.06	0.09	0.70	0.488			
Intellectual Stimulation	0.19	0.10	1.94	0.053			
Inspirational Motivation	0.16	0.11	1.43	0.155			
Individualized Consideration	-0.12	0.08	-1.57	0.117			
Empowering	0.23	0.09	2.42	0.016			

## 4. Discussion and Recommendations

### 4.1. Summary of the Findings

The study investigated the influence of transformational leadership of higher education institution (HEI) administrators on teachers' performance in China and the following findings were summarized:

The overall assessment of transformational leadership qualities is evident. In particular, the empowering attribute had the highest mean, which demonstrated the confidence of HEI faculty feel that their leaders empower them effectively. While the individualized consideration attribute gained the lowest among the dimensions.

The overall performance of teachers is rated as average. Specifically, student engagement gained the highest mean, suggesting that teachers are somewhat effective in engaging students, but there is room for improvement. On the contrary, teaching strategies received the lowest mean score of the categories. This may indicate that while strategies are in place, they might not fully engage or meet the diverse needs of students.

Among the predictors, only the empowering variable has a positive influence on the assessment of teachers' performance. This suggests that with every increase in empowerment, there is a corresponding increase in the outcome variable.

### 4.2. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

The overall assessment of transformational leadership qualities among HEI leaders indicated a generally positive view of their leaders' effectiveness. Notably, the "Empowering" attribute received the highest mean score,

highlighting that faculty members felt a strong sense of empowerment and confidence in their leaders' ability to foster autonomy and initiative.

Conversely, the "Individualized Consideration" attribute received the lowest score among the dimensions, which indicated that while leaders were effective in many aspects of transformational leadership, there is an opportunity for improvement in providing personalized support and attention to individual faculty needs.

The overall positive performance showed that faculty viewed their leaders as effective in embodying transformational leadership qualities, indicating a supportive and motivating environment. The high mean score for the "Empowering" attribute reflects faculty confidence in their leaders' ability to foster autonomy and encourage initiative, which is crucial for a thriving academic community.

The lower score in "Individualized Consideration" suggests that leaders may not be providing sufficient personalized support to faculty. Addressing this could enhance faculty engagement and satisfaction.

The finding that only the empowering variable positively influences the assessment of teachers' performance indicated that when teachers feel more empowered—such as through increased autonomy, support, and trust from their leaders—there is a measurable improvement in their performance.

This highlighted the importance of leadership practices that focus on empowering teachers. By fostering an environment where teachers feel valued and supported, educational leaders can enhance overall teaching effectiveness.

### 4.3. Recommendations

Based on the research conclusions, the following plan of action were recommended:

Leaders can create an environment where faculty thrive and

contribute meaningfully by encouraging transparent and open dialogue where faculty feel comfortable sharing ideas, feedback, and concerns. Regular meetings, forums, and suggestion boxes can facilitate this.

Leaders in higher education institutions can enhance personalized support and attention to individual faculty needs by encouraging faculty to develop individualized professional development plans that align with their career goals and interests.

Leaders in higher education institutions can provide sufficient personalized support to faculty by ensuring faculty have access to necessary resources. This helps them focus on their roles without unnecessary obstacles.

Initiatives aimed at enhancing empowerment among teachers can significantly improve teaching outcomes. When teachers feel they have control over their content and teaching methods, they are more invested in their work. Include teachers in school governance and decision-making processes, such as curriculum committees or policy discussions. This involvement gives teachers a voice and a sense of ownership over their environment.

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