



Transformational Leadership Practices and Institutional Decision-Making Among Graduate School Professors and College Officials: The Northeastern College Lens

Dr. Sabina Bautista-Pascual
Northeastern College, Santiago City, Philippines
sabinapascual@gmail.com
<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-9069-0664>

Abstract

Transformational leadership has become increasingly significant in higher education institutions as academic leaders face complex organizational demands, institutional reforms, and quality assurance requirements. This study explored the transformational leadership practices and institutional decision-making experiences among graduate school professors and college officials in Northeastern College, Santiago City. Using a qualitative phenomenological research design, the study gathered data from purposively selected graduate school professors, academic coordinators, deans, and college officials through semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Findings revealed that transformational leadership practices were manifested through collaborative governance, inspirational academic leadership, faculty empowerment, and participatory institutional planning. Participants emphasized that inclusive decision-making processes strengthened organizational trust, faculty engagement, and institutional effectiveness. However, challenges such as communication gaps, workload pressures, and resource limitations affected institutional decision-making processes. The findings underscore the importance of transformational leadership in promoting organizational adaptability, shared governance, and academic excellence in higher education institutions. The study contributes to educational leadership literature by highlighting the role of participatory leadership practices in sustaining institutional development in private higher education institutions in the Philippines.

Keywords: transformational leadership, institutional decision-making, higher education leadership, participatory governance, academic administration, graduate school leadership

Introduction

Higher education institutions continuously encounter organizational, administrative, and academic challenges brought about by globalization, technological advancement, accreditation demands, and changing educational policies. In this context, transformational leadership has emerged as an essential leadership approach that enables educational institutions to foster innovation, institutional collaboration, and organizational sustainability. Transformational leaders influence organizational members by promoting shared vision, motivation, participatory governance, and professional empowerment.

In Philippine higher education institutions, institutional leaders and graduate school professors play critical roles in shaping academic quality, faculty development, policy implementation, and institutional decision-making processes. Effective educational leadership contributes significantly to institutional growth, organizational adaptability, and the achievement of academic excellence. As private colleges continue to strengthen institutional competitiveness and quality assurance practices, leadership approaches that encourage collaboration and participatory governance become increasingly important.

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Transformational leadership theory, developed by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1985), emphasizes leaders' capacity to inspire organizational members toward collective goals through intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealized influence. In educational settings, transformational leadership strengthens organizational commitment, faculty morale, and collaborative institutional culture.

Previous studies revealed that transformational leadership positively influences institutional effectiveness, faculty engagement, and organizational performance in higher education institutions (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2020; Hallinger, 2021). Similarly, participatory decision-making processes enhance trust, communication, and organizational cohesion among academic stakeholders (Bush, 2020). However, limited qualitative studies have explored how graduate school professors and college officials experience transformational leadership practices and institutional decision-making processes within private higher education institutions in the Philippine context.

This study explored the transformational leadership practices and institutional decision-making experiences among graduate school professors and college officials in Northeastern College, Santiago City. Specifically, it sought to examine how leadership practices influence collaboration, governance, institutional planning, and organizational effectiveness.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985). The theory explains how leaders inspire organizational members through motivation, shared vision, empowerment, and intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders encourage innovation, strengthen organizational commitment, and promote participatory governance.

The study also incorporated Shared Governance Theory, which emphasizes collaborative participation among institutional stakeholders in organizational decision-making processes. Shared governance promotes transparency, accountability, and institutional inclusivity in educational administration.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of graduate school professors and college officials regarding transformational leadership and institutional decision-making.

Research Participants

The participants consisted of graduate school professors, deans, coordinators, and college officials from Northeastern College, Santiago City. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants with extensive administrative and academic leadership experiences.

Data Collection

Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews focusing on leadership practices, institutional governance, organizational collaboration, and decision-making experiences. Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed in analyzing qualitative data. Coding procedures involved familiarization, theme generation, categorization, and thematic interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed regarding the purpose and scope of the study before data gathering.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Collaborative Governance and Participatory Institutional Leadership

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Participants consistently emphasized the importance of collaborative governance and participatory leadership in strengthening institutional administration and organizational effectiveness within Northeastern College, Santiago City. Academic leaders described transformational leadership as promoting consultation, teamwork, inclusivity, and shared accountability in institutional decision-making processes. Participants explained that involving faculty members and academic personnel in planning and policy discussions cultivated a sense of ownership, trust, and professional commitment within the institution.

One participant shared:

“Institutional decisions become more effective when faculty members are consulted and involved in planning.”

Another participant explained:

“Collaborative leadership strengthens trust and commitment among academic personnel.”

Participants further emphasized that participatory leadership practices promoted transparency, strengthened communication channels, and enhanced professional relationships among administrators, graduate school professors, and college officials. They noted that regular consultations, committee meetings, and collaborative planning sessions encouraged openness and mutual respect within the academic community. Faculty members reportedly became more supportive of institutional programs and policies when they felt their perspectives and recommendations were recognized by institutional leaders. Several participants also highlighted that collaborative governance improved institutional responsiveness and facilitated smoother policy implementation. Through participatory leadership, administrators were able to address faculty concerns, organizational issues, and academic priorities more effectively. Participants explained that collective decision-making encouraged unity and minimized conflicts within the institution.

The findings suggest that collaborative governance significantly promotes institutional cohesion, organizational trust, and professional engagement in higher education institutions. Participatory leadership practices foster stronger institutional relationships and contribute to organizational stability and shared accountability. These findings support Bush (2020), who emphasized that participatory educational leadership enhances institutional trust, organizational collaboration, and governance effectiveness in academic institutions. Similarly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2020) found that collaborative leadership practices strengthen faculty commitment, organizational participation, and institutional effectiveness in higher education settings. Hallinger (2021) further explained that inclusive leadership approaches improve communication, shared responsibility, and institutional adaptability among educational organizations.

Moreover, Ainscow (2020) highlighted that participatory governance encourages institutional inclusivity and strengthens stakeholder engagement in educational decision-making processes. In the Philippine context, Brillantes and Fernandez (2021) noted that collaborative leadership in educational institutions promotes organizational transparency, faculty involvement, and sustainable institutional management.

Theme 2: Inspirational Leadership and Faculty Empowerment

Participants described transformational leadership as highly inspirational, motivational, and empowering within the academic environment. Graduate school professors and college officials emphasized that transformational leaders encouraged professional growth, innovation, academic excellence, and faculty development. Participants viewed inspirational leadership as essential in cultivating organizational motivation and sustaining institutional productivity.

One participant remarked:

“Transformational leaders inspire us to become innovative and committed educators.”

Another participant stated:

“Faculty members become more productive when leadership provides encouragement and professional support.”

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Participants further explained that leadership support through mentoring, recognition, professional development programs, and academic encouragement contributed significantly to faculty empowerment and institutional morale. Administrators reportedly encouraged faculty members to pursue graduate studies, attend seminars and conferences, engage in research activities, and participate in institutional development initiatives.

Several participants emphasized that transformational leaders recognized faculty contributions and motivated educators to become proactive and innovative in their academic responsibilities. Such leadership practices reportedly enhanced confidence, strengthened work commitment, and fostered a positive organizational climate within the institution.

Participants also noted that inspirational leadership cultivated stronger interpersonal relationships between administrators and faculty members. Open communication, encouragement, and recognition created a supportive academic environment that enhanced faculty satisfaction and professional engagement. Faculty members reportedly became more willing to collaborate, initiate academic projects, and participate in institutional activities when leaders demonstrated empathy, encouragement, and professional appreciation.

The findings indicate that inspirational leadership positively influences faculty morale, motivation, organizational commitment, and institutional productivity in higher education settings. Transformational leadership practices foster professional empowerment and strengthen academic engagement among faculty members. These findings align with Bass (1985), who explained that transformational leaders motivate followers by promoting shared vision, individualized support, and professional growth. Similarly, Yukl (2020) emphasized that inspirational leadership strengthens organizational performance by enhancing employee motivation and commitment.

Related studies further support these findings. Northouse (2021) emphasized that transformational leadership improves employee satisfaction, innovation, and organizational citizenship behaviors within academic institutions. Meanwhile, Day and Sammons (2020) found that supportive educational leadership enhances teacher morale, professional confidence, and instructional commitment. In another study, Nguyen et al. (2021) revealed that faculty empowerment and leadership encouragement significantly contribute to institutional productivity and academic innovation in higher education institutions.

Additionally, Flores and Gago (2022) reported that leadership recognition and professional support mechanisms positively influence faculty engagement and research productivity among private higher education institutions in Southeast Asia.

Theme 3: Institutional Decision-Making Through Shared Vision and Strategic Planning

Participants highlighted that institutional decision-making processes were strongly guided by organizational vision, strategic planning, institutional mission, and collective academic goals. College officials and graduate school professors emphasized that transformational leadership encouraged administrators and faculty members to work collaboratively toward long-term institutional development and organizational sustainability.

One participant shared:

“Most institutional policies are aligned with the school’s mission and long-term plans.”

Another participant explained:

“Strategic planning meetings allow administrators and faculty to contribute ideas and recommendations.”

Participants observed that shared vision and strategic planning strengthened institutional alignment, organizational direction, and policy consistency. Through collaborative planning activities, administrators and faculty members were able to identify institutional priorities, academic goals, and organizational development strategies. Participants explained that strategic leadership practices facilitated coordinated implementation of institutional programs and strengthened organizational adaptability.

Several participants further emphasized that shared vision enhanced organizational unity and strengthened institutional commitment among academic personnel. Faculty members reportedly became

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more engaged in institutional initiatives when organizational objectives were clearly communicated and collectively understood. Participants explained that transformational leaders consistently reinforced institutional values, mission, and educational goals to ensure alignment among stakeholders.

Participants also highlighted that strategic planning meetings promoted inclusivity and collective participation in institutional governance. Collaborative planning processes reportedly enabled administrators and faculty members to discuss institutional concerns, propose improvements, and contribute to organizational development initiatives. Such practices strengthened accountability and reinforced institutional transparency.

The findings suggest that transformational leadership significantly contributes to strategic institutional governance, organizational sustainability, and institutional effectiveness in higher education institutions. Shared vision and strategic planning strengthen organizational coordination, collective commitment, and institutional adaptability. These findings support Hallinger (2021), who emphasized that leadership practices grounded in shared vision enhance institutional effectiveness, organizational coherence, and educational sustainability. Furthermore, Bush (2020) noted that strategic leadership promotes institutional resilience and strengthens organizational management within academic institutions.

Related studies similarly emphasized the importance of strategic leadership in educational governance. Fullan (2020) explained that educational institutions become more adaptive and sustainable when organizational members collectively participate in institutional planning and reform initiatives. Similarly, Hargreaves and O'Connor (2021) highlighted that collaborative professionalism and shared leadership significantly improve institutional effectiveness and educational quality.

In the Philippine educational context, Bernardo and Mendoza (2022) found that strategic planning and participatory governance practices positively influence institutional development and policy implementation among private colleges and universities. Moreover, OECD (2021) emphasized that educational organizations with strong strategic leadership mechanisms are more capable of addressing institutional changes and operational complexities.

Theme 4: Organizational Challenges Affecting Institutional Decision-Making

Despite positive leadership experiences, participants identified several organizational challenges affecting institutional decision-making processes and governance practices within the institution. Graduate school professors and college officials acknowledged that administrative pressures, communication issues, workload demands, and resource limitations sometimes hindered effective institutional management and policy implementation.

One participant stated:

“Communication delays sometimes affect the implementation of institutional decisions.”

Another participant shared:

“Limited resources and administrative workload create difficulties in institutional planning.”

Participants further identified scheduling conflicts, policy implementation concerns, overlapping administrative responsibilities, and limited institutional resources as major organizational challenges affecting decision-making processes. Faculty members explained that balancing academic responsibilities, administrative tasks, and institutional commitments occasionally created delays in communication and coordination among stakeholders.

Several participants also emphasized that resource limitations affected institutional planning, faculty development programs, and implementation of academic initiatives. Participants explained that financial constraints and insufficient institutional support sometimes limited the execution of organizational projects and professional development opportunities.

Additionally, participants observed that communication gaps occasionally resulted in misunderstandings, inconsistencies in policy dissemination, and delays in organizational implementation. Participants emphasized the need for stronger communication systems, improved coordination mechanisms, and more streamlined administrative processes to enhance institutional governance and operational efficiency.

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Despite these challenges, participants acknowledged that transformational leadership practices helped minimize organizational conflicts and encouraged collaborative problem-solving among institutional stakeholders. Leaders reportedly addressed organizational difficulties through consultation, adaptability, and collective decision-making approaches.

The findings indicate that institutional decision-making processes are significantly influenced by organizational constraints, administrative workload, communication systems, and resource availability. Effective transformational leadership remains essential in addressing institutional challenges and strengthening organizational adaptability within higher education institutions. These findings support OECD (2021), which highlighted that educational institutions experience operational challenges requiring adaptive leadership, collaborative governance, and strategic organizational management. Similarly, Yukl (2020) emphasized that effective leadership enables organizations to navigate institutional complexities and maintain organizational effectiveness amid changing educational demands.

Related studies also support these findings. Harris (2020) explained that educational institutions frequently encounter organizational pressures related to resource management, policy implementation, and communication systems. Likewise, Garcia and de Guzman (2021) found that administrative workload and insufficient institutional resources significantly affect governance efficiency and faculty productivity in Philippine higher education institutions.

Furthermore, UNESCO (2021) emphasized that institutional resilience in higher education depends on effective communication systems, collaborative leadership, and organizational adaptability. In another study, Rivera and Santos (2022) observed that educational administrators who employ participatory leadership practices are better able to address institutional challenges and strengthen organizational problem-solving mechanisms.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate that transformational leadership practices significantly influence institutional governance, faculty empowerment, organizational collaboration, and decision-making processes within higher education institutions. The experiences of graduate school professors and college officials in Northeastern College, Santiago City reveal that transformational leadership fosters participatory governance, strengthens institutional trust, and promotes collective responsibility among academic stakeholders. Collaborative leadership practices enabled faculty members and administrators to engage actively in institutional planning, policy formulation, and organizational development initiatives, thereby enhancing institutional cohesion and professional commitment.

The findings strongly support Transformational Leadership Theory proposed by Burns (1978) and Bass (1985), which emphasizes leaders' capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower organizational members toward the achievement of shared institutional goals. Transformational leaders cultivate organizational commitment by promoting shared vision, intellectual stimulation, individualized support, and collaborative engagement. In the present study, participants consistently described institutional leaders as encouraging consultation, inclusivity, and faculty participation in decision-making processes. Such leadership practices contributed to stronger organizational relationships, improved communication, and enhanced faculty morale.

The study further highlights that participatory governance and collaborative decision-making significantly contribute to organizational effectiveness and institutional sustainability in higher education institutions. Participants emphasized that involving faculty members in strategic planning and institutional governance strengthened transparency, accountability, and organizational alignment. These findings corroborate the study of Bush (2020), which emphasized that participatory educational leadership enhances institutional trust, organizational stability, and governance effectiveness. Similarly, Hallinger (2021) explained that collaborative leadership practices improve institutional adaptability and strengthen organizational performance in academic institutions.

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The findings also underscore the importance of inspirational leadership and faculty empowerment in promoting academic productivity and professional engagement. Participants noted that transformational leaders encouraged faculty development, innovation, and professional growth through mentoring, recognition, and institutional support. These leadership practices reportedly enhanced faculty confidence, motivation, and institutional commitment. The findings align with Northouse (2021), who emphasized that transformational leadership positively influences employee motivation, organizational commitment, and professional satisfaction. Likewise, Day and Sammons (2020) found that supportive educational leadership strengthens teacher morale, instructional effectiveness, and organizational engagement. Moreover, the study highlights the significance of strategic leadership and organizational adaptability in addressing institutional challenges and administrative complexities. Although participants acknowledged challenges related to communication delays, workload pressures, and resource limitations, they emphasized that collaborative leadership practices facilitated problem-solving, organizational coordination, and institutional resilience. Transformational leaders reportedly addressed institutional concerns through consultation, flexibility, and collective decision-making mechanisms. These findings support OECD (2021), which emphasized that adaptive and collaborative leadership practices are essential in addressing operational challenges and sustaining organizational effectiveness in higher education institutions.

The findings further suggest that organizational resilience in academic institutions depends largely on leaders' ability to foster collaborative institutional culture, strengthen professional relationships, and encourage collective participation in governance processes. Effective transformational leadership enables educational institutions to remain responsive to evolving educational demands, accreditation requirements, and organizational reforms. As educational institutions continue to encounter increasing administrative and academic complexities, transformational leadership remains essential in promoting institutional sustainability, organizational innovation, and academic excellence.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership practices among graduate school professors and college officials in Northeastern College, Santiago City significantly contribute to collaborative governance, faculty empowerment, strategic institutional planning, and organizational effectiveness. Participatory decision-making processes strengthen institutional trust, professional engagement, and academic collaboration within higher education institutions.

Despite organizational challenges related to communication, workload, and resource limitations, transformational leadership remains essential in promoting institutional sustainability and organizational adaptability. The study highlights the importance of inclusive governance and inspirational leadership in strengthening higher education administration.

Implications of the Study

The findings provide important implications for higher education leadership and institutional governance. Educational institutions may strengthen participatory governance mechanisms and collaborative decision-making processes to improve organizational effectiveness.

Higher education administrators may develop leadership training programs focusing on transformational leadership competencies, communication strategies, faculty empowerment, and organizational management.

The study also contributes to educational leadership literature by providing qualitative insights into transformational leadership experiences within private higher education institutions in the Philippine context.

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