
Transformational leadership and educational quality: strategies for innovation and institutional change

Liderazgo transformacional y calidad educativa: estrategias de innovación y cambio institucional

Liderança transformacional e qualidade educacional: estratégias de inovação e mudança institucional

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to analyze transformational leadership in the educational field, considering its dimensions, characteristics, and impact on institutional quality and teacher performance. The research was developed under a qualitative approach with a descriptive and analytical scope through a documentary review of scientific literature related to educational leadership, organizational culture, and institutional innovation. For data collection, scientific articles, academic books, and indexed studies addressing transformational leadership in different educational contexts were selected. The findings revealed that the dimensions of transformational leadership, particularly idealized influence, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, promoted collaborative environments, strengthened organizational climate, and increased teacher commitment. Likewise, shared strategic vision, effective communication, and innovation capacity were identified as essential characteristics of transformational leaders in contemporary educational institutions. It was concluded that transformational leadership constitutes a strategic tool to promote processes of change, innovation, and continuous improvement, strengthening educational quality and institutional development in dynamic and complex contexts.

Keywords: transformational leadership, education, educational innovation, institutional management.

Resumen

El presente estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar el liderazgo transformacional en el ámbito educativo, considerando sus dimensiones, características e impacto en la calidad institucional y el desempeño docente. La investigación se desarrolló bajo un enfoque cualitativo, con alcance descriptivo y analítico, mediante la revisión documental de literatura científica relacionada con liderazgo educativo, cultura organizacional e innovación institucional. Para la recopilación de información se seleccionaron artículos científicos, libros y estudios indexados que abordaron el liderazgo transformacional desde diferentes contextos educativos. Los

resultados evidenciaron que las dimensiones del liderazgo transformacional, especialmente la influencia idealizada, la motivación inspiradora y la estimulación intelectual, favorecen la construcción de ambientes colaborativos, el fortalecimiento del clima organizacional y el incremento del compromiso docente. Asimismo, se identificó que la visión estratégica compartida, la comunicación efectiva y la capacidad de innovación representan características fundamentales de los líderes transformacionales en las instituciones educativas contemporáneas. Se concluyó que el liderazgo transformacional constituye una herramienta estratégica para promover procesos de cambio, innovación y mejora continua, fortaleciendo la calidad educativa y el desarrollo institucional en contextos dinámicos y complejos.

Palabras clave: liderazgo transformacional, educación, innovación educativa, gestión institucional.

Resumo

O presente estudo teve como objetivo analisar a liderança transformacional no âmbito educacional, considerando suas dimensões, características e impacto na qualidade institucional e no desempenho docente. A pesquisa foi desenvolvida sob uma abordagem qualitativa, com alcance descritivo e analítico, por meio da revisão documental da literatura científica relacionada à liderança educacional, cultura organizacional e inovação institucional. Para a coleta de informações, foram selecionados artigos científicos, livros acadêmicos e estudos indexados que abordaram a liderança transformacional em diferentes contextos educacionais. Os resultados evidenciaram que as dimensões da liderança transformacional, especialmente a influência idealizada, a motivação inspiradora e a estimulação intelectual, favorecem a construção de ambientes colaborativos, o fortalecimento do clima organizacional e o aumento do compromisso docente. Da mesma forma, identificou-se que a visão estratégica compartilhada, a comunicação eficaz e a capacidade de inovação representam características fundamentais dos líderes transformacionais nas instituições educacionais contemporâneas. Concluiu-se que a liderança transformacional constitui uma ferramenta estratégica para promover processos de mudança, inovação e melhoria contínua, fortalecendo a qualidade educacional e o desenvolvimento institucional em contextos dinâmicos e complexos.

Palavras-chave: liderança transformacional, educação, inovação educacional, gestão institucional.

Introduction

In the contemporary educational context, institutions face constant transformations resulting from social, technological, and cultural changes that directly impact teaching and learning processes. This reality demands management models capable of responding flexibly and strategically to emerging educational challenges. In this scenario, educational leadership acquires significant relevance, as institutional administrators and managers become key actors in promoting processes of adaptation, innovation, and continuous improvement. According to Serrano-Cadena (2025), contemporary school leadership should be oriented toward institutional transformation and the development of educational environments capable of responding to emerging social demands. Likewise, Castillo-Ortiz (2001) argues that school change processes require leaders with strategic vision and the ability to mobilize the educational community toward shared goals.

Among the various leadership approaches, transformational leadership has become one of the most influential models in both organizational and educational settings. This type of leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to inspire, motivate, and generate commitment among organizational members, fostering significant changes in institutional culture and professional performance. According to Romero et al. (2013), organizational change constitutes a dynamic process involving structural, cultural, and human modifications within institutions. In the same vein, Contreras Torres and Barbosa Ramírez (2013) state that transformational leadership

promotes innovation and strengthens institutional capacity to face complex and uncertain contexts.

In educational institutions, transformational leadership plays an essential role in consolidating collaborative work environments oriented toward improving educational quality. This approach encourages the active participation of teachers, students, and administrative staff in decision-making processes, strengthening the sense of belonging and institutional commitment. Furthermore, it contributes to teachers' professional development through practices of guidance, motivation, and recognition. According to Pedraja-Rejas et al. (2020), leadership and organizational culture are determining factors in achieving quality standards in higher education institutions. Consequently, educational management requires leaders capable of promoting institutional cultures oriented toward innovation, continuous learning, and teamwork.

However, several Latin American educational institutions still face difficulties related to rigid organizational structures, limited staff participation, and constraints in institutional innovation processes. These challenges affect administrative efficiency, organizational climate, and the achievement of academic objectives. In this regard, Silva Sánchez et al. (2026) indicate that many public universities in Latin America experience weaknesses in their organizational culture, which restrict transformation and institutional improvement processes. This situation highlights the need to strengthen leadership models that can energize organizational structures and promote more participatory and efficient educational environments.

The relevance of studying transformational leadership in the educational field lies in its potential to enhance institutional performance and strengthen the quality of educational processes. This leadership model not only drives administrative changes but also promotes the human and professional development of members of the educational community. In this context, Terán Varela and Lorenzo Irlanda (2011) emphasize that organizational culture significantly influences job performance and productivity within higher education institutions. Therefore, understanding the implications of transformational leadership is essential for designing management strategies that promote more innovative, inclusive, and excellence-oriented educational institutions.

Based on the foregoing, the present study aims to analyze transformational leadership in the educational field, considering its main characteristics, dimensions, and impacts on organizational culture and educational quality. Furthermore, it seeks to reflect on the importance of this leadership approach as a strategic tool for strengthening innovation, participation, and institutional improvement processes in contemporary educational contexts.

Methodology

This research was conducted under a qualitative approach, as it enabled the analysis and interpretation of the characteristics, dimensions, and implications of transformational leadership in the educational field from a descriptive and analytical perspective. This approach facilitated the understanding of phenomena related to institutional management, organizational culture, and the behavior of educational stakeholders within dynamic and complex contexts. According to Álvarez González (2005), qualitative educational research seeks to understand social reality through the reflective analysis of the phenomena under study. Likewise, Sierra Salcedo and Caballero Delgado (2021) argue that this approach promotes the critical interpretation of educational and organizational processes from a contextualized perspective.

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical scope, as it was aimed at identifying the main theoretical and conceptual contributions related to transformational leadership in educational institutions. Through this methodological design, the characteristics of leadership, its fundamental dimensions, and its influence on educational quality and institutional innovation were examined. In this regard, Cancela Guzmán et al. (2010) point out that descriptive studies

allow the examination of social and educational phenomena through the observation and systematic analysis of documentary information. Similarly, the research incorporated an analytical component by critically interpreting the findings identified in the reviewed scientific literature.

Documentary review was used as the data collection technique, allowing the compilation and analysis of scientific articles, academic books, indexed studies, and specialized documents related to educational leadership, organizational culture, and institutional innovation. The selection of sources was based on criteria of thematic relevance, currency, and academic rigor, prioritizing studies published in recognized scientific journals. According to Palma et al. (2006), documentary review constitutes a fundamental procedure for systematizing information and generating interpretations supported by reliable scientific evidence.

The analysis procedure was carried out through the organization, classification, and interpretation of the collected information. Initially, categories related to the dimensions of transformational leadership were identified, including motivation, inspiration, innovation, collaborative work, and organizational culture. Subsequently, the theoretical contributions of various authors were compared in order to identify similarities, differences, and current trends regarding educational leadership. Finally, a critical interpretation of the findings was conducted, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on institutional improvement and the strengthening of contemporary educational processes.

Development

Transformational Leadership in the Educational Field

Transformational leadership constitutes one of the most relevant approaches in contemporary educational management due to its capacity to promote significant changes within organizations. This leadership model is characterized by the positive influence that leaders exert on institutional members, fostering motivation, commitment, and innovation. In the educational context, transformational leadership strengthens the participation of teachers and administrators in the construction of shared goals aimed at improving educational quality. According to Mendoza Torres and Ortiz Riaga (2006), this approach directly impacts organizational culture and institutional effectiveness, promoting more collaborative and dynamic work environments.

The importance of transformational leadership in educational institutions lies in its ability to respond to challenges arising from social, technological, and pedagogical changes. Educational organizations require leaders capable of guiding innovation and adaptation processes in the face of complex and constantly changing contexts. In this regard, Roza Mogollón and Abaunza de González (2010) argue that transformational leadership promotes human and professional development within organizations by fostering relationships based on trust, communication, and teamwork. Therefore, this leadership model has become a strategic tool for strengthening institutional management and educational performance.

Dimensions of Transformational Leadership

Idealized Influence

Idealized influence represents one of the fundamental dimensions of transformational leadership and is related to the leader's ability to become an ethical and professional role model within the organization. Transformational leaders generate admiration and respect among members of the educational community due to their consistent behavior, institutional commitment, and ability to inspire trust. According to Mendoza Torres and Ortiz Riaga (2006), this dimension contributes to the consolidation of organizational cultures based on shared values and common goals. Consequently, idealized influence strengthens institutional identity and promotes the active participation of teachers and students in educational processes.

In the educational field, idealized influence fosters the development of strong interpersonal relationships among administrators, teachers, and other institutional members. The transformational leader acts as a role model, demonstrating responsibility, professional ethics, and commitment to continuous improvement. According to Roza Mogollón and Abaunza de González (2010), this dimension contributes to strengthening institutional trust and developing positive work environments. Furthermore, it facilitates the formation of committed work teams focused on achieving institutional goals and improving pedagogical processes.

Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational motivation constitutes another essential dimension of transformational leadership and refers to the leader's ability to stimulate enthusiasm and commitment among organizational members. In educational institutions, this dimension is fundamental for promoting a shared vision aimed at achieving academic and organizational objectives. According to Tirado Gálvez and Heredia Llatas (2022), transformational leaders motivate the educational community through inspiring discourse, recognition of teachers' work, and the creation of positive expectations regarding the institution's future. In this way, a stronger sense of belonging and collective commitment is fostered.

Inspirational motivation also influences the ability of educational institutions to face challenges and change processes. Transformational leaders encourage an organizational culture based on cooperation, innovation, and continuous improvement. In this regard, Sardón Ari (2017) notes that school management improves significantly when leaders promote motivating and participatory environments. Moreover, this dimension contributes to increasing teacher job satisfaction and strengthening interpersonal relationships within educational institutions, thereby supporting the achievement of academic and administrative goals.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is related to the transformational leader's ability to foster critical thinking, creativity, and innovation within the organization. In the educational context, this dimension encourages the search for new pedagogical and administrative strategies aimed at improving the quality of educational processes. According to González et al. (2013), transformational leaders stimulate teachers' active participation in problem-solving and the generation of innovative proposals. In doing so, professional autonomy and organizational learning are strengthened.

Intellectual stimulation also promotes the development of competencies related to decision-making and adaptation to change. Transformational educational leaders encourage critical reflection processes that help identify opportunities for institutional improvement. According to Hincapié Montoya et al. (2018), this dimension contributes to the continuous improvement of work teams through the promotion of creative ideas and collaborative solutions. Consequently, educational institutions enhance their innovation capabilities and respond more effectively to the demands of the contemporary educational environment.

Characteristics of the Transformational Leader

Shared Strategic Vision

One of the primary characteristics of a transformational leader is the ability to build and promote a shared strategic vision within the organization. This vision helps direct institutional efforts toward common goals related to educational quality and organizational development. According to García Morales et al. (2007), transformational leadership positively influences organizational learning and institutional innovation through the consolidation of shared objectives. In this sense, strategic vision promotes the integration of efforts and strengthens collective commitment.

In educational institutions, the development of a shared vision contributes to strengthening institutional identity and encouraging the active participation of the educational community.

Transformational leaders communicate clear objectives and build confidence regarding the organization's future. According to Pérez Ávila and Pérez Ávila (2025), a shared strategic vision facilitates innovation processes and improves job performance within organizations. Therefore, this characteristic is essential for driving sustainable change in the educational sector.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is an essential characteristic of transformational leadership because it facilitates interaction among organizational members and strengthens the institutional climate. Transformational leaders employ communication strategies aimed at promoting dialogue, participation, and conflict resolution. According to Enderica Armijos et al. (2018), effective communication significantly contributes to strengthening organizational leadership and improving workplace relationships. Consequently, educational institutions are able to consolidate more participatory and collaborative work environments.

Likewise, effective communication strengthens institutional trust and facilitates the coordination of academic and administrative activities. Transformational leaders promote spaces for active listening and continuous feedback among members of the educational community. According to Bracho Parra and García Guilianny (2013), communication is a key element in the success of organizational transformation processes. Similarly, Cañarte Vélez et al. (2025) emphasize that leadership serves as a bridge for strengthening communication and collaborative work within organizational teams.

Capacity for Change and Innovation

The ability to promote change and drive innovation processes represents another fundamental characteristic of transformational leadership. Transformational leaders possess the skills necessary to identify opportunities for improvement and encourage strategies aimed at institutional development. In the educational field, this capacity is indispensable for responding to challenges arising from social and technological transformations. According to García Rubiano (2011), transformational leadership facilitates the acceptance of organizational change through the motivation and active participation of institutional members. Consequently, institutional adaptation and continuous improvement processes are strengthened.

Innovation promoted through transformational leadership also facilitates the implementation of new pedagogical methodologies and educational management strategies. Transformational leaders foster organizational environments that are open to learning and creativity. According to Bravo-Bravo and Herrera-Sánchez (2023), modern organizations require leaders capable of managing change and promoting sustainable innovation processes. Therefore, educational institutions need to strengthen leadership models oriented toward transformation and the development of institutional capabilities.

Impact of Transformational Leadership in the Educational Field

Improvement of Organizational Climate

Transformational leadership significantly influences the improvement of the organizational climate within educational institutions. Transformational leaders promote positive interpersonal relationships, respectful environments, and participatory spaces that enhance the well-being of teachers and administrators. According to López Ramírez et al. (2019), managerial leadership plays a fundamental role in creating institutional environments oriented toward coexistence and the strengthening of the educational community. In this sense, transformational leadership contributes to improving job satisfaction and organizational cohesion.

The improvement of the organizational climate directly impacts the academic and administrative performance of educational institutions. A positive work environment fosters

teacher commitment, effective communication, and teamwork. According to Ballena De La Cruz et al. (2023), organizational climate is a determining factor in pedagogical success and the strengthening of educational quality. Therefore, transformational leadership is positioned as a key factor in promoting healthy and efficient educational environments.

Strengthening Collaborative Work

Collaborative work represents one of the main benefits associated with transformational leadership in educational institutions. Transformational leaders promote cooperation among teachers, administrators, and administrative staff through participatory strategies and professional interaction spaces. According to Cortez Rodríguez (2023), organizational climate significantly influences job satisfaction and the ability of teams to develop effective collaborative processes. Consequently, transformational leadership strengthens institutional integration and promotes the development of more participatory educational communities.

Furthermore, collaborative work facilitates the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and pedagogical strategies among teachers. This type of interaction contributes to the continuous improvement of educational processes and the strengthening of institutional innovation. According to Molina-Vicuña (2023), transformational leadership constitutes an effective model for improving teachers' work climate and strengthening organizational commitment. Therefore, educational institutions require leaders capable of promoting collaborative relationships aimed at achieving common objectives.

Increased Teacher Commitment

Transformational leadership also has a significant impact on teacher commitment, as it strengthens motivation, sense of belonging, and professional satisfaction. Transformational leaders recognize teachers' efforts and promote work environments focused on professional growth and institutional well-being. According to Rey-Sarmiento (2024), workplace well-being and teacher commitment are essential factors for ensuring educational quality in Latin America. In this regard, transformational leadership contributes to strengthening teachers' emotional and professional stability.

Increased teacher commitment supports the improvement of teaching processes and the achievement of institutional objectives. Committed teachers actively participate in academic activities, institutional projects, and educational innovation processes. According to Pérez-Mamani et al. (2026), managerial leadership significantly influences the strengthening of university teachers' commitment. Therefore, transformational leadership has become a strategic component for promoting more efficient, innovative, and academically excellent educational institutions.

Discussion

The analysis conducted revealed that transformational leadership constitutes a highly relevant management model for strengthening educational and organizational processes within academic institutions. The reviewed findings consistently indicate that this approach enhances motivation, participation, and commitment among members of the educational community, thereby contributing to institutional quality improvement. In this regard, Mendoza Torres and Ortiz Riaga (2006) argue that transformational leadership positively impacts organizational culture and organizational effectiveness, an aspect directly related to the capacity of educational institutions to create collaborative environments oriented toward the achievement of shared goals. Similarly, the contributions of Roza Mogollón and Abaunza de González (2010) reinforce the notion that this leadership model promotes relationships based on trust and professional development.

One of the most relevant aspects identified in the theoretical review concerns the dimensions of transformational leadership and their influence on institutional performance. Idealized influence provided insight into how educational leaders become ethical and professional role

models capable of strengthening organizational cohesion and institutional trust. In this regard, Tirado Gálvez and Heredia Llatas (2022) affirm that inspirational motivation constitutes an essential element for promoting positive educational environments oriented toward the achievement of institutional goals. Likewise, the findings of Sardón Ari (2017) demonstrate that school management improves considerably when leaders foster teacher participation and motivation, thereby strengthening organizational culture and teamwork.

Another significant finding relates to the ability of transformational leadership to promote innovation and change processes within educational institutions. The intellectual stimulation encouraged by transformational leaders fosters critical thinking, creativity, and the search for innovative solutions to organizational and pedagogical challenges. According to González et al. (2013), this type of leadership promotes professional autonomy and the active participation of teachers in institutional processes. Similarly, García Rubiano (2011) notes that transformational leadership facilitates the acceptance of organizational change through motivation and support strategies. These contributions reflect the importance of consolidating leadership models capable of responding to contemporary educational transformations.

Regarding organizational impact, the reviewed studies demonstrate that transformational leadership significantly contributes to improving the institutional climate and strengthening collaborative work. The analyzed results are consistent with the findings of López Ramírez et al. (2019), who argue that managerial leadership plays a decisive role in creating institutional environments conducive to coexistence and participation. Likewise, Ballena De La Cruz et al. (2023) emphasize that organizational climate is a determining factor in achieving pedagogical success and strengthening educational quality. Consequently, transformational leadership promotes the consolidation of more participatory and efficient educational environments.

Furthermore, transformational leadership also demonstrated a close relationship with the strengthening of teacher commitment and job satisfaction within educational institutions. Teachers who perceive support, recognition, and guidance from their administrators exhibit higher levels of motivation and institutional engagement. In this regard, Rey-Sarmiento (2024) maintains that workplace well-being directly influences teacher commitment and the quality of educational processes. Similarly, Pérez-Mamani et al. (2026) conclude that managerial leadership represents a strategic factor in strengthening professional commitment and the active participation of teaching staff. These findings suggest that transformational leadership influences not only the administrative dimension but also the human and professional development of educational stakeholders.

Finally, the discussion revealed that transformational leadership constitutes a strategic tool for addressing contemporary educational challenges and promoting sustainable institutional improvement processes. The analyzed literature consistently highlights the need to consolidate leadership styles based on effective communication, innovation, and the development of shared visions. In this context, García Morales et al. (2007) affirm that this model promotes organizational learning and institutional performance. Therefore, educational institutions need to strengthen leadership competencies capable of responding to current social and academic demands while promoting organizational cultures oriented toward excellence, participation, and educational transformation.

Conclusions

Transformational leadership emerged as a fundamental management model for strengthening educational and organizational processes in contemporary academic institutions. Based on the theoretical review conducted, it was evident that this approach promotes motivation, innovation, and commitment among members of the educational community, fostering more participatory institutional environments oriented toward continuous improvement. Furthermore, the dimensions of transformational leadership, such as idealized influence,

inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation, demonstrated a significant impact on strengthening organizational culture and supporting teachers' professional development.

Likewise, it was identified that the characteristics of transformational leaders, particularly a shared strategic vision, effective communication, and the capacity to promote change and innovation, represent essential elements for responding to the demands of the current educational context. Transformational leaders contribute to strengthening collaborative work, institutional cohesion, and the development of favorable work environments for academic and administrative performance. Consequently, this leadership model supports the consolidation of more flexible, efficient educational institutions capable of adapting to contemporary social and technological challenges.

Moreover, the study concluded that transformational leadership has a direct impact on improving organizational climate and increasing teacher commitment. The existence of institutional environments based on trust, participation, and professional recognition strengthens job satisfaction and teachers' involvement in educational processes. In addition, transformational leadership promotes pedagogical and organizational innovation, encouraging practices oriented toward academic excellence and the continuous improvement of educational quality.

Finally, it was concluded that educational institutions need to strengthen leadership models oriented toward organizational transformation and the human development of their members. Transformational leadership constitutes a strategic tool for promoting sustainable change processes and consolidating institutional cultures grounded in cooperation, creativity, and collective participation. Therefore, it is necessary to encourage leadership training and development programs that enhance competencies related to transformational management, enabling educational institutions to effectively address the challenges and demands of contemporary education.

Study Limitations

This study presented certain limitations related to its exclusively documentary and theoretical nature, as the analysis was based on a review of scientific literature concerning transformational leadership in the educational field. Consequently, no empirical data obtained through fieldwork, interviews, or surveys conducted with administrators and teachers were incorporated. Furthermore, the availability of recent research in certain Latin American contexts was limited, restricting the possibility of conducting broader comparisons regarding the implementation of transformational leadership across different educational systems.

Future Research

Future research is encouraged to develop empirical studies aimed at analyzing the impact of transformational leadership in specific educational institutions, considering variables such as teacher performance, organizational climate, pedagogical innovation, and job satisfaction. Likewise, comparative studies across different educational levels and sociocultural contexts would be valuable for identifying the most effective leadership strategies for strengthening educational quality. Additionally, future studies could incorporate mixed-methods approaches that complement theoretical analysis with quantitative and qualitative evidence.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares that there is no personal, academic, professional, or financial conflict of interest that could influence the development, analysis, or publication of this research. Furthermore, it is affirmed that the study was conducted under principles of objectivity, academic ethics, and scientific rigor.

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