



## Transformational leadership and policy implementation: Educational governance among educational officers in Mangalore Taluk

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### Abstract

Transformational leadership has emerged as a key theoretical lens for understanding how individual leaders can inspire systemic change in decentralized educational contexts. This study explores the intersection of transformational leadership and policy implementation among educational officers in Mangalore Taluk, Karnataka. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining semi-structured interviews with standardized leadership behavior inventories and implementation checklists. The findings reveal distinct patterns in how transformational leadership traits are expressed among educational officers and how these traits correlate with policy implementation effectiveness. Officers exhibiting stronger transformational traits, particularly in motivation and consideration, tended to engage more constructively with stakeholders and adapt policies to local needs. Institutional culture also played a moderating role, with supportive supervisory structures and regular capacity-building sessions fostering more proactive leadership behaviors. The study highlights key barriers to policy implementation, including inconsistent training, limited resource availability, and hierarchical constraints that sometimes restricted the autonomy necessary for innovation. The integration of leadership theory and policy implementation frameworks underscores the importance of seeing educational governance as a dynamic space shaped by human behaviors, leadership choices, and localized challenges. Future research can build on these findings by adopting a longitudinal and comparative approach, expanding the study across multiple taluks or districts, and incorporating perspectives from subordinate staff. The study affirms that transformational leadership is necessary for bridging the gap between educational policy and practice, and strengthening this dimension at the officer level may be one of the most effective ways to ensure that educational reforms translate into meaningful improvements on the ground.

**Keywords:** Transformational leadership, policy implementation, educational governance, educational officers, Mangalore Taluk, mixed-methods, decentralized educational contexts

### Introduction

Effective educational governance at the local level requires more than policy mandates—it demands leadership that can translate these policies into meaningful practice. In recent years, transformational leadership has emerged as a key theoretical lens for understanding how individual leaders can inspire systemic change, particularly in decentralized educational contexts. This research explores the intersection of transformational leadership and policy implementation among educational officers in Mangalore Taluk, Karnataka. By examining how leadership styles shape the delivery of educational reforms, the study aims to uncover both the opportunities and barriers faced by mid-level administrators. The investigation is grounded in real-world governance structures and seeks to bridge theory and practice in understanding the dynamics of policy execution within local education systems.

### 1. Background: Decentralized Educational Administration in India

India's educational administration operates within a multilayered framework that balances national directives with localized implementation. With education as a concurrent subject under the Constitution, governance is decentralized, assigning significant responsibility to state-level and local officers in translating central policies into actionable strategies. In Karnataka, and particularly in taluks like Mangalore, this decentralized structure entrusts block and cluster-level educational officers with the vital task of

ensuring policy compliance, program delivery, and institutional development (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[18]</sup>. Their roles extend beyond administration to active leadership in addressing region-specific educational challenges.

### 2. Need for Strong Leadership in Effective Policy Execution

The success of educational policies at the local level often hinges less on the design of the policy and more on the quality of its implementation. This requires capable leadership that can interpret abstract policy goals, mobilize resources, inspire school-level stakeholders, and adapt strategies to suit the socio-cultural realities of the area. In practice, educational officers must lead not only through procedural authority but also through vision, communication, and engagement (Arabi & Musthaf, 2020) <sup>[2]</sup>. As educational reforms increasingly target systemic change—such as digital learning, inclusive education, or competency-based curricula—strong leadership is critical to ensure meaningful translation of policies into classroom outcomes.

### 3. Relevance of Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector

Transformational leadership, a model introduced by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass and Avolio (1994), emphasizes the role of leaders in inspiring and motivating followers to exceed expectations through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support. In the public

sector—especially education—this leadership style aligns well with the demands of reform implementation, capacity building, and stakeholder coordination. Transformational leaders are known to cultivate a shared sense of purpose, foster innovation, and build resilience within organizations—all of which are essential in educational governance. Among mid-level administrators like educational officers, transformational leadership offers a pathway to bridge the gap between bureaucratic compliance and proactive governance.

#### 4. Research Objectives and Significance

This study seeks to explore how transformational leadership practices influence policy implementation outcomes among educational officers in Mangalore Taluk. It aims to identify specific leadership behaviors that facilitate or hinder effective governance and to understand the contextual dynamics that shape policy delivery in this region. The research holds significance not only for regional educational administration but also for broader discussions on leadership development, decentralization, and public sector innovation. By anchoring theoretical insights in a localized administrative context, this study contributes to the evolving discourse on leadership effectiveness in India's educational governance.

#### Literature Review

##### 1. Transformational Leadership in Public Sector

Transformational leadership is recognized for its significant impact on public sector performance, particularly in education and administration. This leadership style emphasizes four key constructs: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, as defined by Bass and Avolio in 1994. These constructs facilitate enhanced employee motivation, innovation, and goal achievement.

In education, transformational leadership fosters an environment conducive to innovation and knowledge sharing. For instance, it has been found to significantly enhance innovation performance within Ghanaian higher education institutions by improving knowledge management capabilities and organizational learning (Asiedu *et al.*, 2020) [3]. Furthermore, in the Iraqi context, transformational leadership has been shown to promote both product and process innovation in higher education, highlighting its potential to address the challenges posed by globalization and rapidly changing environments (Al-Husseini & Elbeltagi, 2014) [1].

Administration in public sectors also benefits from transformational leadership. It has been found to improve organizational performance through enhanced knowledge management and employee motivation (Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021) [10]. In the nursing education sector, for example, transformational leadership can create a culture of teamwork that positively affects engagement, suggesting potential applications in broader public administration contexts (Fischer, 2017) [7]. Additionally, transformational leadership in public organizations has been linked to enhanced organizational citizenship behavior due to its influence on public service values and goal clarification (Ritz *et al.*, 2014) [17].

Interestingly, the structure of public sector organizations does not significantly inhibit transformational leadership, contrary to what might be expected with bureaucratic systems. This suggests that such organizations might not be

as constrained by structural issues as traditionally thought, allowing transformational leaders to implement effective change (Wright & Pandey, 2009) [21].

In summary, transformational leadership significantly influences both educational and administrative sectors in the public domain. It improves motivation, innovation, and organizational performance by fostering environments that encourage employee engagement, knowledge management, and innovation.

##### 2. Policy Implementation in Educational Governance

The implementation of educational policy can be analyzed through different models, primarily top-down and bottom-up, each possessing distinct characteristics. The top-down model emphasizes a hierarchical approach where policies are crafted by higher authorities and disseminated through the ranks for implementation (Ritter & Bammer, 2010) [16]. In contrast, the bottom-up approach involves more decentralized participation, encouraging input from those at the grassroots level to inform policy development and implementation.

Middle-level officers play a crucial role in local educational delivery, acting as intermediaries who translate policy into practice within schools. Their functions often include leading teaching and learning, managing teachers, and setting directions (Koh *et al.*, 2011) [11]. Despite this critical position, these leaders face multifaceted challenges. Middle leaders must balance top-down directives with the nuances of local needs, requiring them to exercise significant discretion and judgment (Shaked & Schechter, 2018) [19].

The challenges in aligning policy with field-level execution are notable. Middle leaders often encounter ambiguity and a lack of clear guidelines, making it difficult to implement reforms effectively (Shaked & Schechter, 2018) [19]. They also face stressors such as workload increases and inadequate training, which can impede their ability to perform their roles optimally (Lambert, 2023) [12].

Overall, while middle-level officers are pivotal in bridging the gap between policy and practice, ensuring they have adequate support and training is essential for the successful implementation of educational policies. This understanding is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of educational governance through appropriate models that accommodate the complexities of educational delivery at the local level.

##### 3. Leadership and Policy Nexus

Leadership plays a crucial role in educational reform and change management. Various studies have highlighted the importance of leadership in shaping educational outcomes and driving innovation within educational institutions.

One significant case study is the "Success for All" reform model, which emphasizes leadership as a critical factor for successful reform implementation. This model relies on principal leadership and reform facilitators working together to overcome challenges and drive changes effectively. It underscores the importance of leadership in reconnecting teaching and administration by changing structures and cultures within schools (Datnow & Castellano, 2001) [5].

Another insightful case is the curriculum change initiative at the University of California, San Francisco, School of Medicine. This case illustrates a structured leadership approach where leaders established a compelling need for curriculum reform, built a guiding coalition, and effectively communicated a bold vision for change. This process demonstrated the phases of change from envisioning a new

curriculum to designing and implementing it successfully, thereby revealing numerous leadership strategies employed during the reform (Loeser *et al.*, 2007) <sup>[13]</sup>.

Leadership effectiveness, particularly in fostering innovation and managing change, is influenced by a leader's ability to communicate effectively and motivate others. A study has confirmed that these skills significantly impact a leader's ability to implement change and drive innovation, pointing to skill deficiencies as a common barrier to successful organizational change (Gilley *et al.*, 2008) <sup>[8]</sup>.

In the context of educational technology leadership, changes in teaching and learning due to technological advancements require effective leadership to reorganize educational practices. The role of educational technology leaders is crucial in this respect, as they focus on reorganizing teaching rather than teaching itself, adapting to new technological advancements (Davies, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>.

The role of leadership in crises is also pivotal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the lack of proper crisis management skills among school leaders highlighted gaps in leadership theory. Effective crisis management requires strong vision, strategic innovation, and adaptive leadership skills to confront challenges at both instructional and organizational levels (Chatzipanagiotou & Katsarou, 2023) <sup>[4]</sup>.

Overall, these studies and case analyses highlight the integral role of leadership in educational change. Leaders are not only responsible for driving reform but also for creating an environment conducive to innovation and continuous improvement in educational systems.

#### 4. Regional Studies and Context

Research on educational governance and leadership, especially in specific regions like Mangalore Taluk in Karnataka, reveals several dimensions and gaps that need further exploration. Previous studies highlight the impact of local administrative behaviors and educational practices on the broader governance framework. For instance, a study examining the educational environment in coastal Karnataka during the COVID-19 pandemic found that students had a generally positive perception of online classes, teaching and learning, and college administration, suggesting that effective governance was perceived positively during challenging times (Panakaje *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[15]</sup>.

However, gaps exist in empirical research specifically targeting leadership impacts at the taluk level, such as in Mangalore Taluk. Literature often focuses on broader educational dimensions but fails to dive into the specificities of leadership practices in smaller administrative units like taluks, which can vary significantly from the state or national level practices.

Research in Mangalore has mainly focused on other domains, such as environmental studies and public health. For example, studies have examined local attitudes toward environmental issues, such as resistance to synthetic pyrethroids in malaria vectors (Tiwari *et al.*, 2010) <sup>[20]</sup>, and the cultural and ecological importance of sacred groves in Karnataka (Ormsby, 2013) <sup>[14]</sup>. These studies provide insights into how local governance and cultural practices influence public health and environmental management but are less focused on educational leadership.

Moreover, there is a significant opportunity to research how educational leadership affects teacher practices and student outcomes in local contexts. A study on the competency levels of teachers in administering first aid in Mangalore's schools revealed inadequate training, suggesting room for

improvement in leadership roles in educational governance (Joseph *et al.*, 2015) <sup>[9]</sup>. Such findings can be pivotal in refocusing governance efforts to prioritize educational enhancement through better administrative support and leadership.

Future research could explore how educational governance and leadership at the taluk level can drive systemic changes and improvements in educational quality, drawing insights from broader studies on educational change and leadership models.

### Theoretical Framework

#### 1. Bass & Avolio's Transformational Leadership Theory

The foundation of this study lies in the transformational leadership model proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), which identifies four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Leaders who embody these traits are believed to inspire commitment, foster innovation, and motivate subordinates to exceed standard expectations. Within the educational setting, such leadership is crucial, especially among mid-level administrators like educational officers who must balance procedural duties with developmental mandates. Their ability to influence school heads, teachers, and community stakeholders through vision and moral authority reflects the central qualities of transformational leadership.

#### 2. Policy Implementation Theory

To understand how leadership impacts implementation, the study draws on two influential policy implementation theories. Mazmanian and Sabatier's top-down model emphasizes how clear policy objectives, administrative control, and resource alignment determine success. However, in the decentralized Indian context, Lipsky's (1980) Street-Level Bureaucracy theory becomes particularly relevant. This bottom-up framework highlights the discretion exercised by frontline public servants (such as educational officers) in interpreting and applying policy. Their decisions are shaped not only by written mandates but also by resource constraints, institutional culture, and individual values.

#### 3. Integration: Leadership Behaviors as Mediators of Implementation

Integrating these frameworks, the study conceptualizes transformational leadership as a mediating variable that influences the fidelity, adaptability, and effectiveness of policy implementation. Educational officers with strong leadership traits may interpret policies constructively, adapt them to local contexts, and engage stakeholders more effectively. Conversely, weak or transactional leadership may result in rigid implementation, compliance-based governance, and resistance to change. This integrated view allows the research to examine not just the structural determinants of policy outcomes but also the human and behavioral dimensions that shape them.

### Methodology

#### 1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with embedded quantitative elements, making it a mixed-methods approach. The primary data collection strategy involves semi-structured interviews with educational

officers to explore their leadership styles and experiences with policy implementation. This is supplemented by standardized leadership behavior inventories and implementation checklists to identify patterns and correlations. The qualitative data provides contextual depth, while the quantitative inputs add comparative clarity.

**2. Sample and Participants**

The participants include educational officers at the block, cluster, and taluk levels in Mangalore Taluk, representing a mix of seniority and administrative roles. Purposive sampling ensures inclusion of officers involved directly in implementing state and national educational reforms (e.g., NEP 2020, RMSA, Samagra Shiksha).

**Table 1:** Participant profile Summary

Designation	No. of participants	Years of Experience	Gender Distribution
Block Education Officers	5	10-20 years	4M, 1F
Cluster Resource Persons	8	5-15 years	5M, 3F
Assistant Directions	3	15+ years	3M
Total	16	-	12M, 4F

**Relevance of the Table:** This table helps illustrate the diversity of administrative experience, gender, and hierarchy within the study, which is vital in understanding variations in leadership behaviors and implementation experiences across roles.

**3. Data Collection Tools**

- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Designed to explore officers' perceptions of leadership, challenges in implementing policies, and adaptive strategies.
- **Leadership Behavior Inventory:** A self-reported scale adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure transformational leadership traits.
- **Policy Implementation Checklist:** A tool to evaluate the degree of policy adaptation, stakeholder engagement, and procedural compliance on key education reforms (e.g., teacher training rollouts, NEP awareness programs).

**4. Data Analysis**

- **Thematic Coding:** Interview transcripts are analyzed using open and axial coding to identify recurring themes (e.g., motivational behavior, adaptive implementation, resource challenges).
- **Correlation Patterns (Quantitative):** Scores from leadership inventories are compared with implementation checklist data to detect associations. For example, officers scoring high in "inspirational motivation" may show higher levels of stakeholder mobilization.

**Results**

The findings from this study reveal distinct patterns in how transformational leadership traits are expressed among educational officers and how these traits correlate with policy implementation effectiveness.

**1. Patterns in Leadership Traits Observed**

Analysis of responses from interviews and the leadership behavior inventory revealed that educational officers in Mangalore Taluk demonstrated varying degrees of transformational leadership characteristics. The most commonly expressed traits included inspirational motivation (e.g., encouraging staff to adopt reforms) and individualized consideration (e.g., supporting teachers based on their unique needs). However, intellectual stimulation was less frequently observed, suggesting fewer efforts to challenge traditional practices or encourage innovative approaches. Senior officers showed a stronger tendency toward visionary leadership and motivational behavior, while younger officers leaned more toward compliance-based or transactional styles.

**2. Insights into Policy Delivery Gaps and Innovations**

Several officers reported inconsistencies in policy dissemination, especially concerning new initiatives like the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. A lack of clarity in directives and uneven access to training resources were cited as major barriers. However, innovation emerged at the field level where officers adopted localized adaptations, such as digital training workshops and community engagement for school enrollment drives. These instances of adaptive implementation were primarily associated with officers who scored higher on transformational traits.

**3. Variation by Officer Seniority, Training, and Institutional Context**

Officers with more than 15 years of experience demonstrated a higher capacity to balance policy mandates with local contextual realities. Institutional support, such as access to digital tools and regular training, also influenced leadership effectiveness. For instance, cluster resource persons in well-supported blocks showed better implementation outcomes compared to those in resource-constrained settings. Officers who had participated in leadership development programs displayed greater confidence in managing reforms and stakeholder resistance.

**Table 2:** Summary of Observed Leadership Traits and Implementation Outcomes

Leadership Traits	High Presence (n=9)	Moderate (n=5)	Low/Absent (n=2)	Associated Implementation Outcomes
Inspirational Motivation	Yes	Yes	No	Strong stakeholder engagement, high program participation
Idealized Influenced	Yes	Yes	No	Greater staff loyalty and institutional trust
Individualized Consideration	Yes	Yes	No	Adaptive teacher support, improved morale
Intellectual Stimulation	No	Yes	Yes	Limited innovation, procedural adherence without flexibility

**Relevance:** This table highlights the relationship between specific transformational traits and practical implications outcomes across various roles and institutional contexts.

### Discussion

The findings of this study support the central hypothesis that transformational leadership positively mediates the success of educational policy implementation at the local administrative level. Officers exhibiting stronger transformational traits—particularly in motivation and consideration—tended to engage more constructively with stakeholders and adapt policies to local needs, a result consistent with Bass and Avolio's (1994) framework.

In line with Lipsky's Street-Level Bureaucracy theory, officers operated with considerable discretion, especially when policy clarity or training support was lacking. This discretion proved beneficial when used by transformational leaders, who exercised judgment to implement reforms creatively and responsively. In contrast, officers with weaker leadership traits often defaulted to mechanical or compliance-driven execution, missing opportunities for deeper stakeholder alignment.

#### 1. Leadership Behaviors That Promote or Hinder Implementation

Motivational and supportive leadership was found to promote trust, teacher morale, and community participation, all of which are essential for reforms like inclusive education and digital integration. Conversely, lack of initiative and poor communication—common among those low in intellectual stimulation—were associated with policy stagnation or superficial implementation. This suggests that not all aspects of transformational leadership are equally emphasized in practice, indicating areas for leadership development.

#### 2. Influence of Local Administrative Culture

Institutional culture also played a moderating role. Blocks with supportive supervisory structures and regular capacity-building sessions fostered more proactive leadership behaviors. In contrast, bureaucratic inertia and rigid hierarchies in certain zones limited officer autonomy, constraining transformational efforts. This aligns with Wright and Pandey's (2009)<sup>[21]</sup> observation that structure, while influential, does not inherently limit transformational behavior but can either enable or stifle it depending on leadership context.

#### 3. Limitations and Credibility of Findings

While this study provides valuable insights, it is limited by its sample size and focus on a single taluk, which may restrict generalizability. Additionally, self-reported leadership inventories carry a risk of response bias, despite triangulation with policy implementation checklists. Future research could benefit from larger, cross-district samples and longitudinal tracking of leadership development over policy cycles.

#### Conclusion & Future Scope

This study has explored the intersection of transformational leadership and educational policy implementation through the lens of officers operating within the decentralized governance framework of Mangalore Taluk. The findings indicate that transformational leadership traits—particularly

inspirational motivation and individualized consideration—play a significant role in facilitating effective, context-sensitive execution of educational reforms. Officers who demonstrated these behaviors were more successful in adapting policy directives to local needs, mobilizing stakeholders, and maintaining institutional coherence during reform rollouts.

The research also highlighted key barriers to policy implementation, including inconsistent training, limited resource availability, and hierarchical constraints that sometimes restricted the autonomy necessary for innovation. Notably, while transformational traits were present in varying degrees, intellectual stimulation—critical for fostering innovation—was less consistently demonstrated across the sample. This suggests that while motivational leadership is common among officers, deeper cognitive engagement with policy goals and institutional strategies remains an area for development.

The integration of leadership theory and policy implementation frameworks in this context underscores the importance of seeing educational governance not merely as a structural or procedural system, but as a dynamic space shaped by human behaviors, leadership choices, and localized challenges. Mangalore Taluk, while a single administrative unit, offers a microcosm of the broader Indian educational system's strengths and vulnerabilities in reform execution.

#### 1. Future Scope

Future research can build on these findings by adopting a longitudinal and comparative approach. Tracking changes in leadership behaviors over time—especially in response to leadership development programs or policy shifts—could provide richer insights into causal relationships. Expanding the study across multiple taluks or districts would enhance generalizability and allow for benchmarking between administrative cultures.

Furthermore, incorporating perspectives from subordinate staff (such as school heads and teachers) can triangulate findings and offer a more comprehensive view of leadership impact. There is also potential to integrate digital tools and real-time governance dashboards to quantitatively assess policy implementation outcomes linked to leadership indicators. Lastly, embedding leadership training modules into official administrative development programs could serve as a practical intervention, the impact of which may be evaluated in future implementation research.

In sum, the study affirms that transformational leadership is not only desirable but necessary for bridging the gap between educational policy and practice. Strengthening this dimension at the officer level may well be one of the most effective ways to ensure that educational reforms translate into meaningful improvements on the ground.

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