

Network Interaction Strategies of School Leaders and Teachers' Commitment To Institutional Innovation

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Abstract- *In recent years, institutional innovation in education has gained prominence, especially in rapidly developing educational systems. School leaders play a critical role in facilitating this transformation, primarily through effective network interaction strategies that enable deeper collaboration and engagement among teachers. These strategies include structured professional communities, cross-school partnerships, digital collaboration platforms, and shared leadership models. Teachers' commitment to institutional innovation often hinges on their engagement in such networks, as it fosters mutual trust, autonomy, and collective efficacy. As observed in emerging research, innovation does not thrive in isolation but within interconnected environments designed to stimulate continuous professional dialogue and experimentation. The integration of peer-coaching networks among schools has proven beneficial in strengthening innovation-related teaching practices. According to Dang and Toan (2024), school leaders who promoted open, cross-departmental collaborations were more likely to see teachers engaging in curriculum redesign, active learning strategies, and education technology adaptation. The willingness of teachers to implement new methods was significantly related to the perceived support they received through these structured interactions. Network interaction not only enhances teacher competencies but also nurtures emotional investment in the institution's goals.*

Keywords: This evidence supports the idea that when school leaders build meaningful professional connections, institutional innovation becomes more achievable.

I. INTRODUCTION

The power of distributed leadership has also been emphasized in the educational reform discourse. As demonstrated in an investigation by Mahmud and Goh (2023), school principals who established rotational leadership roles and participatory decision making forums found increased teacher ownership in school innovation efforts. These networked models provided teachers with both voice and visibility, key elements in fostering long-term commitment to change. When leadership is perceived as inclusive, teachers

are more likely to associate institutional goals with their own professional identity and aspirations. Such shared vision sustains innovation efforts beyond administrative cycles and political shifts.

Networked interactions extended beyond the school walls through collaboration with local universities and non-governmental organizations. Kurniawan and Sofyan (2022) found that these extended partnerships helped teachers develop innovative pedagogies, especially in STEM education, which led to increased confidence and commitment to systemic reforms. School leaders who brokered these connections were described as “innovation facilitators” rather than traditional administrators. The blurring of institutional boundaries enabled the emergence of dynamic learning ecosystems, enhancing both teacher capability and morale. This underscores that school innovation is as much about external networks as internal ones.

The role of technology-mediated collaboration has been another focal point, particularly in urbanized regions. A study by Liew and Phoon (2025) revealed that principals who leveraged cloud based platforms to connect teaching staff across schools reported higher levels of collaborative planning, idea-sharing, and solution generation. These digital interactions enabled time-flexible professional learning while increasing teacher engagement in innovation dialogues. Such platforms also democratized access to leadership by reducing the hierarchical gap between senior and junior teachers. As a result, teacher participation in institutional innovation became more equitable and sustained.

Building relational trust through informal interactions has proven critical to teachers' emotional alignment with change agendas. Chareon and Rattanaporn (2023) found that school leaders who engaged in frequent one-on-one mentoring and “coffee corner dialogues” with staff fostered high levels of psychological safety. These informal networks were just as impactful as formal structures, especially in promoting innovation during uncertain policy transitions.

Trust enabled teachers to be more candid about the risks associated with change and to co-create feasible innovations without fear of reprimand. This cultural nuance highlights the importance of context sensitive network strategies in fostering innovation.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the rapidly evolving educational landscape, institutional innovation has become a cornerstone for schools aiming to meet the demands of the 21st century. This is also evident at Zhangjiajie

Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in China. School leaders play a pivotal role in orchestrating network interaction strategies that foster collaborative environments conducive to innovation. These strategies often involve leveraging digital platforms, professional learning communities, and cross-institutional partnerships to enhance teaching and learning processes. The emphasis on collectivism and hierarchical structures presents unique challenges and opportunities in implementing such strategies effectively (Zheng & Ye, 2024).

Teachers' commitment to institutional innovation is significantly influenced by the quality and extent of their interactions within these networks. When school leaders actively engage teachers in decision making processes and provide platforms for shared learning, teachers are more likely to embrace innovative practices. A study highlighted that schools with strong leadership support and collaborative cultures saw higher levels of teacher commitment to innovation initiatives (Liu et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of strategic network interactions in cultivating an environment where innovation can thrive.

Digital transformation has further accentuated the need for effective network interaction strategies. The integration of technology in education requires school leaders to not only be adept at digital tools but also to guide their teachers through the transition. The Ministry of Education's directive to enhance science education in primary and secondary schools necessitates a coordinated effort among educators, facilitated by robust network interactions (Reuters, 2025). Such initiatives demonstrate the critical role of leadership in steering institutional innovation through collaborative networks.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework, developed by Ostrom (2005, 2011), provides a

robust lens to understand the complex interactions within institutional settings such as schools. This framework systematically identifies and classifies institutions by focusing on the “action arena,” a social space where actors engage in activities governed by specific rules, community attributes, and biophysical/material conditions that influence their behaviors and outcomes (Ostrom, 2005; Park & Seo, 2023). Within educational leadership, the IAD framework facilitates the examination of how network interaction strategies employed by school leaders influence teachers' commitment to institutional innovation by unpacking the underlying rules and actor behaviors that shape decision-making processes (Lee & Nakamura, 2022; Chen & Hsu, 2024).

The IAD framework emphasizes seven types of institutional rules—position, boundary, choice, information, aggregation, scope, and payoff—that govern the behavior of actors in the action arena (Ostrom, 2005; Kim & Liang, 2021). Position rules regulate actors' roles and responsibilities, shaping the diversity and distribution of power among school leaders and teachers, which directly impacts their interaction strategies and motivation towards innovation (Fujimoto & Tan, 2023). Boundary rules determine entry and exit conditions within these roles, influencing how inclusive or exclusive participation is in innovation efforts (Zhao & Wang, 2023). Choice rules dictate the flexibility or rigidity in decision-making, affecting how adaptive or constrained school leaders and teachers are in responding to emerging challenges in institutional innovation (Lin & Yamamoto, 2021).

IV. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1 shows the research paradigm assessing the relationship between the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation in Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in China. It likewise presented the correlation between the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self-assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation.

LEADERSHIP-NETWORK MENTORING PROGRAM

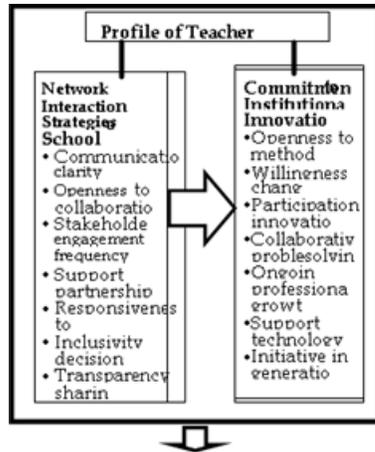


Figure 1. Research Paradigm

Figure 1 indicates the research paradigm of the study. It presents the intervening variables, specifically the teacher respondents' demographic data. It also presents the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self-assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation.

It shows the expected output of the study, which is the leadership-network mentoring program.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The outcomes of this study can be valuable for the following:

Teachers – This study will deepen teachers' understanding of how network interaction strategies employed by school leaders can influence their sense of engagement, collaboration, and overall commitment to institutional innovation. It will highlight the value of professional networks and open communication in shaping a more participative and innovative school culture.

School Heads and Administrators – This study will provide school leaders with actionable insights into the types of interaction strategies that foster greater teacher commitment and drive institutional innovation. By identifying effective leadership communication practices, administrators can build more cohesive teams and create supportive environments that encourage creativity and change.

Policy Makers – This study will inform policy makers about the critical role of school leadership in promoting innovation through effective network interaction. Findings may guide the development of educational policies that support collaborative

leadership models and reward innovative practices within educational institutions.

Accreditors and Quality Management Service Providers – This study will offer accreditation bodies and quality assurance providers evidence on how internal communication and collaboration dynamics contribute to institutional performance and innovation. It will help refine evaluation criteria and indicators used to assess leadership effectiveness and school culture.

Professional Development Providers – This study will support the creation of training programs focused on enhancing school leaders' interaction strategies, with a specific emphasis on building trust, improving communication, and fostering teacher commitment. Such programs can drive more innovative and adaptable school systems.

Future Researchers – This study will serve as a foundation for future investigations into leadership communication, teacher motivation, and educational innovation. It will encourage broader research into the mechanisms through which interpersonal networks within schools contribute to long-term institutional improvement.

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

The study was carried out in Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in China. The scope of the study covered the assessment of the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self-assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation by teachers from Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in China. The study evolved around the selected profile variables of the teacher respondents such as sex, age, educational attainment, and length of service.

To be specific, the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders was based on the following: communication clarity, openness to collaboration, stakeholder engagement frequency, support for partnerships, responsiveness to feedback, inclusivity in decisions, and transparency in sharing. This variable was correlated with the self assessment of the teacher respondents of their commitment to institutional innovation in terms of openness to new methods, willingness to change, participation in innovation, collaborative problem-solving, ongoing professional growth, support for technology use, and initiative in idea generation.

In data gathering and utilizing more complex statistical treatment, the study included descriptive statistics and correlational analysis with one-way ANOVA and post hoc analysis to interpret further and investigate the teacher respondents' demographic data and the significant relationship between the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self-assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation.

VI. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts a descriptive-comparative-correlational research design, marked by the clear articulation of variables, structured data collection, detailed analytical processes, and a nuanced appreciation of contextual influences. As noted by Bennett and Clarkson (2022), descriptive research plays a crucial role in observing and documenting phenomena as they naturally occur, enabling researchers to capture the defining traits, behaviours, and patterns within real-world contexts. This methodological foundation supports the generation of accurate and insightful representations of social dynamics.

Building on this, descriptive methodologies are fundamental within the social and behavioural sciences. According to Whitmore and Davies (2023), such approaches allow for the collection of factual and unbiased data relating to individual perceptions, actions, and experiences. Through this, researchers can identify emergent trends and subtle variations across populations, which are vital for a comprehensive understanding of complex psychological and societal constructs.

In addition, Hargrave and Ellis (2024) argue that comparative techniques enhance the ability to distinguish key differences and similarities across groups or contexts, thereby refining the precision of analysis. They further assert that correlational methods are instrumental in identifying statistically significant relationships between variables, adding explanatory depth and theoretical clarity. In this research, correlation will be used to explore the associations between demographic characteristics and selected behavioural or attitudinal dimensions, offering insights with both theoretical and practical relevance.

By bringing together descriptive exploration, comparative evaluation, and correlational inquiry, this methodological strategy integrates the insights of Bennett and Clarkson (2022), Whitmore and Davies (2023), and Hargrave and Ellis (2024). This holistic framework strengthens the reliability, analytical richness, and applicability of the study's

findings, setting a robust platform for future academic contributions and practical application.

VII. RESEARCH LOCALE

The study was conducted at Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in Zhangjiajie City in Hunan Province, China.

Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College is a provincial public full-time ordinary higher education institution approved by the People's Government of Hunan Province in 2001. The school was founded in 1979 and was successively affiliated with the former Ministry of Aviation Industry, the Ministry of Aerospace Industry, the Aviation Industry Corporation of China, the Hunan Provincial Defense Science and Technology Industry Bureau, and the Hunan Provincial Department of Industry and Information Technology.

It is now under the jurisdiction of the Hunan Provincial Department of Education. The school is a provincial-level exemplary higher vocational college in Hunan Province, a national model college for graduate employment experience, a key vocational college in the national mechanical industry, a designated college for the *定向培养军士* of the People's Liberation Army of China, a high-skilled talent training base for AVIC, a high-skilled talent cultivation base for AVIC Engine, a vocational education and training base for national defense science and technology industry, a national vocational skills training base for workers, and a provincial-level employment training base in Hunan Province Model School for Entrepreneurship, Civilized

Campus of Hunan Province and Safe University of Hunan Province. The school is located in Zhangjiajie City, a world-renowned tourist destination. It covers an area of 762 mu, with a building area of 172,000 square meters and total fixed assets of 1.2 billion yuan. Currently, there are over 570 staff members and more than 14,300 students on campus.

The school closely aligns with industrial education and offers six distinctive professional clusters, namely, aviation manufacturing, aviation maintenance, aviation electrical engineering, aviation management, artificial intelligence, and tourism management, with a total of 35 majors. Among them, the aviation manufacturing professional group is a provincial first-class characteristic professional group and has been selected as a provincial key construction major to serve the beautiful blueprint of "three Highs and Four New" in Hunan. The Numerical Control Technology professional

Group and the Aircraft Electromechanical Equipment Maintenance Professional Group are the high-level vocational college professional groups of "Chu Yi" in Hunan Province.

Sampling Technique

The respondents of the study were the teachers from Zhangjiajie Aviation Industry Vocational and Technical College in

Zhangjiajie City in Hunan Province, China. In selecting the teacher respondents, purposive sampling technique was used among the teacher respondents.

Research Instrument

In gathering the needed data, the researcher used a researcher-made questionnaires on the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders and their self-assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation.

The researcher used face to face or onsite in administering this questionnaire.

The questionnaire was composed of the following parts.

Part 1 – This section determines the demographic profile of the teacher respondents.

Part 2 – This section determines the teacher respondents' assessment of the network interaction strategies of school leaders.

Part 3 – This section identifies the teacher respondents' self assessment of their commitment to institutional innovation.

VIII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section covers the presentation of the results, analysis and interpretation of data gathered in the sequence of the study. The statistical data are shown in tables which served as basis for analysis and interpretation of data.

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