TEACHERS' EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXERCISE UNDER MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION

YuSong Liu[1], JianJun Song[2], YuLi Zhang[3,*]
[1]Graduate School, Sehan University, Mokpo 57447, South Korea;
[2]School of Electronic Technology and Engineering, Shanghai Technical Institute of Electronics & Information, Shanghai 201411, China;
[3]School of tourism, Kunming University, Kunming 650214, Yunnan, China.
Corresponding Author: YuLi Zhang, Email: zhangyuli0204@163.com

Abstract: Maslow's theory of motivation posits that human needs can be structured hierarchically. This hierarchical structure consists of physiological needs, safety needs, social needs, esteem needs, and self-actualization needs, progressing in a specific order. Individuals will only pursue higher-level needs once their lower-level needs have been satisfied. This theory has been widely applied in the realm of social sciences, providing a systematic framework for understanding human behavior and motivation. Educational leadership of teachers refers to the influence and capabilities demonstrated by educators during the teaching process, enabling them to inspire students' learning potential and guide them towards common goals. This form of leadership is not only reflected in the selection of teaching methods and strategies within the classroom but also in the attention and support given to students' development. Through positive communication, motivation, and demonstration, teachers can shape students' academic achievements and personal character, laying the foundation for their future success. In this process, teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge; they act as guides and inspirers, promoting educational advancement and societal development through their practice and influence. This paper primarily analyzes two theories, examining their defined dimensions in the context of educational studies, and drawing comparisons that lay the groundwork for future research.
Keywords: Theory of motivation; Educational theory; Teacher leadership

1 THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION ON ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Motivation is not merely a product of psychological activity; it is a process of the evolution of internal psychological dynamics. The core of this process lies in goal setting, as goals are crucial for guiding individual behavior and providing the initial impetus. When individuals develop an awareness of a particular goal, external incentives gradually transform into internal needs, which then become a powerful force driving behavior. Furthermore, motivation not only necessitates individuals to engage in physiological activities but also drives psychological activities, which together form significant means for individuals to achieve their objectives.

Therefore, the impact of motivation on individuals is fundamental, as it profoundly reflects the essence of specific behaviors. Through these behaviors, we can gain insight into individuals' values and fundamental needs. From the perspective of organizational behavior, the study of motivation is crucial for understanding individuals' behavior patterns within teams or organizations, improving work efficiency, and promoting the achievement of organizational goals.

Contemporary motivational psychologists, from the perspective of cognitive psychology, propose that motivation is an intrinsic psychological process or internal drive that guides, inspires, and facilitates individual activity through goals or objects. In other words, motivation is guided and inspired by a certain goal and generates the driving force to push the individual's behavior [1]. However, where does this driving force originate? It stems from the individual's perception of the goal, i.e, when an external trigger is transformed into an internal need, this need becomes the driving force for the individual to engage in a certain activity[2], For example, for children who are about to enter school, school may initially be just an external inducement. However, under the guidance of adults or the influence of their peers, students gradually develop an understanding of school and then form expectations or needs for schooling. This need becomes the driving force for children to go to school and study, and going to school and studying becomes the specific goal of their behavior. This implies that motivation only arises when a target becomes an individual's necessity. Therefore, needs constitute the true driving force behind human behavior. It's worth noting that individual goals may initially be imperfect, and they may change correspondingly with shifts in the environment, personal cognition, and evolving needs. Furthermore, motivation plays a crucial role in organizational operations. While employees' abilities and talents represent their potential value, these alone cannot be directly translated into tangible contributions to the organization. It is only when employees can fully leverage their abilities and talents that they can deliver substantial benefits to the organization. The extent to which employees can harness their capabilities and talents largely depends on their level of motivation [3].

Regardless of how advanced an organization's technology and sophisticated its hardware facilities are, these resources cannot be fully utilized and leveraged unless they are mastered and applied by employees who are highly motivated. Therefore, it can be said that the core of management lies in motivation. Inspiring the work motivation of each employee is one of the important missions entrusted to organizational managers. Through effective motivational

measures, managers can harness employees' enthusiasm and creativity, enabling them to wholeheartedly engage in their work and contribute as much as possible to the organization's development.

Motivation refers to the strong inner drive that compels individuals to engage in certain activities and commit to specific goals. The source of this drive lies in whether the goals can, and to what extent they can, satisfy personal needs. Motivation encompasses three core elements: first, it determines the direction of behavior, which serves as the basis for individuals' decision-making when choosing actions; second, it reflects the level of effort, indicating the degree of commitment an individual invests during the execution of a behavior; finally, it represents the level of persistence, showing how much effort an individual is willing to exert to maintain their choices and behaviors when faced with difficulties and challenges. Together, these three elements constitute a complete framework of motivation, influencing individuals' decision-making and behavioral performance.

Based on the above analysis, we can categorize motivation into different dimensions based on its distinct characteristics, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Characteristics of Motivation and Corresponding Dimensional Distinctions

Motivational Characteristics	Dimension	Description
Goal Setting as the Core	Goal	A key factor that guides the direction of individual behavior and provides the original drive
Transformation of External Incentives into Internal Needs	Need	External incentives are transformed into internal needs, which become a strong driving force for behavior
Driving Physiological and Psychological Activities	Activity	Motivation not only drives physiological activities but also psychological activities, collectively forming important means to achieve goals
Reflecting the Essence of Individual Behavior	Behavioral Essence	Motivation profoundly reflects the essence of individual specific behaviors, revealing personal values and fundamental needs
Significance in Organizational Behavior	Organizational Behavior	The study of motivation is important for understanding individual behavior patterns within teams or organizations, enhancing efficiency, and promoting the achievement of organizational goals
Cognitive Psychology Perspective	Internal Psychological Process	Motivation is an internal psychological process or internal drive that guides, inspires, and sustains individual activities through goals or objects
Evolution of Goals and Needs	Evolution	Individuals' goals may be imperfect, and they can change as a result of the evolution of the environment, personal cognition, and needs

2 MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR EDUCATION

Motivation, as an intrinsic driving force behind individual behavior, primarily arises from two core factors: needs and stimulation. Needs refer to the psychological states' individuals exhibit due to lacking something. This deficiency may originate internally, such as material elements required for physiological balance (e.g, water, food), or externally, such as psychological needs in social environments (e.g, social recognition, emotional connections) [4].

Maslow's theory of motivation provides us with a comprehensive framework for understanding human motivation. This theory not only reveals the hierarchical structure of human needs but also emphasizes the importance of fulfilling these needs for individual growth and development. In the field of education, Maslow's theory holds profound significance. It reminds educators to pay attention to students' basic needs, ensuring these needs are met to create an educational environment conducive to their holistic development. At the same time, educators need to recognize that different students may be at different levels of need hierarchy. Therefore, in educational practice, it is necessary to teach according to students' abilities and cater to their personalized needs.

Maslow categorizes human needs into two main types: basic needs and growth needs. Each type carries distinct characteristics and significance. Firstly, basic needs are closely tied to human instincts and exhibit five notable traits: Firstly, their absence can lead to health issues. Secondly, once satisfied, they can alleviate disease concerns. Thirdly, their restoration can aid in healing related ailments. Fourthly, when faced with complex and free choices, people tend to prioritize fulfilling these basic needs over others. Lastly, in healthy individuals, these needs often remain relatively stable, subdued, or latent. Basic needs primarily include physiological needs (such as food, water), safety needs, needs for love and belonging, and needs for respect [5].

The other type is growth needs, which are not directly governed by instincts and exhibit unique characteristics: on one hand, they are not directly influenced by human desires; on the other hand, they are driven by individuals striving to fulfill their potential; most importantly, satisfying these needs can bring deep, maximum happiness. Growth needs encompass the need for knowledge, aesthetic needs, and the need for self-actualization. By arranging these two types of needs in a hierarchy from lower to higher based on their direct importance to individual survival and meaningful living, the famous hierarchy of needs theory is formed. This theory not only reveals the complexity and diversity of human needs but also provides valuable insights for fields such as education and psychology.

Under the guidance of the hierarchy of needs theory, we understand that when various needs are unmet, individuals will first focus on satisfying the most urgent basic needs. This sequential order applies not only to the workplace but also has profound implications in the field of education. In an educational environment, meeting students' most fundamental physiological needs is the primary foundation.

Therefore, educators first need to create a learning environment that is both comfortable and safe for students. This means ensuring that students do not suffer from heatstroke in the summer and are not injured by cold temperatures in the winter. At the same time, learning facilities such as desks and chairs should be safe and complete. Only under these conditions can students focus on learning without worry, thus stimulating their enthusiasm and initiative in learning. When students' physiological and safety needs are met, they can concentrate more on learning and pursue higher learning quality. Such an environment also provides them with ample energy to explore and satisfy higher-level needs such as knowledge, aesthetics, and self-actualization. Therefore, meeting students' basic needs is the cornerstone of educational work and an essential prerequisite for promoting students' comprehensive development.

In the process of educating and managing students, we must pay special attention to and fulfill their needs for respect and self-fulfillment. As important guides in students' growth, teachers should fully respect students and actively guide them to discover and achieve their life values [6]. Among these needs—respect and self-fulfillment—respect is particularly crucial for students because it directly relates to their psychological well-being. Respect needs can further be categorized into internal and external respect. Internal respect refers to students' self-esteem, which manifests as their desire for confidence and the ability to independently handle various learning and life tasks. Therefore, when educating and managing students, teachers should adopt an encouraging approach to help them build confidence and establish lofty ideals [7] By affirming students' efforts and achievements, teachers can stimulate their intrinsic motivation, encouraging them to pursue self-fulfillment more actively. Additionally, teachers should create an environment filled with respect and love for students, enabling them to not only receive respect but also learn to respect others, thus achieving harmonious coexistence among people.

Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs Theory" profoundly reveals the natural law of human needs evolving from lower to higher levels in a gradual and progressive manner. This theory not only aligns with the general laws of human physical and psychological development and the evolution of needs, but it also showcases its unique value and profound influence through continuous development and refinement. In 1954, Maslow supplemented the original five basic needs with two additional ones, which not only enriched the theoretical content but also made the pathways and goals for fulfilling needs more specific and clearer. This comprehensive theoretical framework provides valuable guidance in fields such as education and management, helping us to better understand human needs and thereby more effectively promote individual holistic development and the long-term progress of organizations.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory profoundly reveals that at different stages, an individual's need system is characterized by one dominant need, while other needs are relatively subordinate. This perspective aligns closely with the materialist dialectics we have long adhered to, further affirming the importance of primary and secondary contradictions at a philosophical level. Through this theory, we gain a clearer understanding of the necessity to accurately grasp and meet an individual's dominant needs in management work, while also appropriately addressing other subordinate needs to achieve optimal management outcomes. This theory not only provides practical guidance for management practices but also offers a solid philosophical foundation.

The Hierarchy of Needs Theory is rooted in the core idea that "human motivation arises from human needs," which resonates with the fundamental principles of psychology and provides a solid psychological foundation for both the theory itself and its application in management practices. Psychology widely acknowledges that human behavior is driven by motivation, which, in turn, originates from various individual needs. It is these diverse needs that form the unique motivational systems of individuals. Maslow also emphasizes that human needs are the source of motivation. He illustrates this point with vivid examples: for instance, the fulfillment of physiological needs (such as food and water) drives people to work hard to ensure basic survival conditions, while the fulfillment of esteem needs motivates individuals to adhere to moral laws to earn respect and recognition from others. These examples clearly demonstrate the close relationship between needs and motivation, as well as the practical value of the Hierarchy of Needs Theory in management practices.

3 TEACHER'S LEADERSHIP

3.1 Case Analysis and Interpretation

Zhang Guimei, female, Manchu ethnicity, born in June 1957, Communist Party member, serves as the Party branch secretary and principal of the Huaping Women's Senior High School in Lijiang, Yunnan Province. She is also the director of the Huaping County Children's Welfare Institute. Zhang has been honored with various accolades including "Role Model of the Times," "National Advanced Worker," "National Model of Teacher Ethics," "Most Beautiful Rural Teacher in China," "Model for Poverty Alleviation Campaign," and "Touching China 2020 Person of the Year." [8]

Zhang Guimei is dedicated to her work and treats her students like her own children. In order to prevent a girl from dropping out of school due to poverty, she persisted in home visits for 11 years, visiting more than 1300 impoverished households and traveling over 100,000 kilometers. [9], her extraordinary efforts have strained her already frail body, but they have also resulted in excellent academic achievements for the female high school students. She spared no effort to fulfill her promise to "stand on the platform as long as I have breath," paving the way for impoverished students to

change their destinies through knowledge with practical actions. Over the years, she has lived in the student dormitories, eating and living with the children, accompanying them in their studies and daily lives. Zhang Guimei has educated and led her students with her unwavering dedication over decades.

The research on teacher leadership in the West emerged in the 1980s. American scholars Silva and others integrated the research on defining the connotation of teacher leadership over the past two decades and divided it into three phases according to the different perspectives of definition. [10]:

In the first stage, teacher leadership was assumed through roles such as research group leader, homeroom teacher, and union representative. In the second stage, researchers began to focus on the importance of teacher participation in curriculum leadership, emphasizing the leadership roles teachers play in team management, curriculum development, and professional development. In the third stage, the spirit of participation and collaboration among teachers is seen as central to reshaping the organizational culture of schools. Researchers place greater emphasis on the self-directedness and collaborative participation of teachers in defining teacher leadership. Undoubtedly, in the case of Zhang Guimei, her practical work demonstrates her high level of teaching professionalism and teacher leadership.

In recent years, researchers have proposed a fourth stage of teacher leadership. As research has progressed, the focus has shifted towards teachers' autonomous leadership in classroom teaching [11], identifying this as a key trait of teacher leadership. For the last few years, scholars from countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand have questioned the authoritarian leadership styles prevalent in schools, making teacher leadership a hot topic in international research.

"A sheep leading a pack of lions cannot match a lion leading a flock of sheep." American leadership expert John C. Maxwell believes that leadership is synonymous with influence. According to American scholars Chapman and O'Neil, leadership is the ability of one person to influence others, especially to inspire them to achieve challenging goals. From this perspective, teachers' leadership manifests in their influence over students, colleagues, and friends, particularly in how they motivate students to reach academic goals and even pursue life aspirations. This leadership extends beyond classroom interactions to encompass communication with colleagues, school administrators, and parents. Teachers' leadership is comprehensive, covering every significant aspect of the educational process.

3.2 Characteristics of Teacher Leadership

Early scholars primarily focused on transformational leadership in macro fields such as politics, business, and military affairs [12]. In these domains, transformational leadership has shown significant efficacy compared to other leadership styles, notably stimulating subordinates' enthusiasm and creativity, thereby achieving results far beyond expectations. This notable success swiftly drew widespread attention from experts in the field of education. They conceptualized classrooms or lessons as miniature communities or teams, where teachers, as conveyors of knowledge and guides to student development, naturally emerged as pivotal leaders within these small-scale communities. Against this backdrop, educational scholars began exploring the potential of integrating transformational leadership into classroom teaching. The aim is to foster teachers' professional development through this innovative leadership approach, positively and profoundly impacting student achievement and holistic development.

During the same period, research on transformational leadership was flourishing on American university campuses. In 2008, prominent American educational scholar Pounder conducted extensive studies revealing the significant impact of transformational leadership in teaching practices. Specifically, teachers experienced marked improvements in their satisfaction with their teaching effectiveness. Concurrently, there was a notable increase in students' satisfaction with their teachers. Most notably, classroom participation among students was greatly enhanced, with students becoming more actively engaged in learning activities, demonstrating heightened enthusiasm and initiative for learning.

In 2010, experts in the field of education in the United States, Bolkan and Goodboy, developed a tool called the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) based on a synthesis of prior research. This tool systematically explored students' perceptions of teachers' transformational leadership in the classroom from both quantitative and qualitative dimensions, as well as the potential relationship between such leadership and student achievement.

Transformational leadership theory posits that idealized influence measures followers' admiration and respect for a leader, often through strong personal charisma that inspires subordinates. In modern classrooms, students increasingly favor teachers who possess strong personal charisma. Leveraging vibrant classroom content and fluent communication skills, teachers vividly impart knowledge. Their humorous and engaging teaching styles break the monotony of traditional classrooms, making learning lively and enjoyable, thereby encouraging students to transition from passive recipients to active seekers of knowledge. During instruction, teachers adeptly cultivate a democratic, friendly, equitable, and harmonious learning environment where every student feels the warmth and vitality of the classroom. In such settings, teachers not only assume the role of transformational leaders but also act as facilitators and participants in classroom dynamics. They skillfully utilize and integrate various factors within the classroom, creating a cohesive and harmonious whole. Through these teaching activities, students' initiative in learning is fully ignited, as they actively engage in a productive and harmonious classroom atmosphere.

However, intellectually stimulating leaders excel in igniting subordinate creativity. They focus on nurturing novel ideas and concepts while encouraging subordinates to seek innovative solutions from multiple dimensions and perspectives. Teachers equipped with the ability to intellectually stimulate demonstrate flexible and adaptable teaching strategies in the classroom. They are particularly skilled at utilizing multimedia resources, such as slides and videos, to enhance instruction, significantly boosting students' enthusiasm for thinking. Teachers with a transformational leadership style

can effectively mobilize students' intrinsic motivation for autonomous learning during teaching practices, making the classroom experience more efficient and orderly, thereby improving the quality of instruction. Students generally believe that when teachers adopt diverse teaching methods to create problem-based contexts, it effectively stimulates their learning motivation. Furthermore, the intuitive presentation of multimedia teaching aids helps them better understand and grasp the key points and challenges of the material.

The transformational leadership theory emphasizes that inspirational motivation is key for leaders to instill vision and a sense of mission among their subordinates, aiming to cultivate pride and a positive, optimistic attitude. Similarly, teachers who possess transformational leadership traits exhibit similar wisdom in education. They grant students significant freedom and space, returning the autonomy of learning back to them, deeply trusting in their innate potential and abilities. These transformational teachers place particular emphasis on creating an environment where students can explore, apply, interact, and self-assess. They encourage students to expand their boundaries of knowledge through activities such as practical exercises, observation, questioning, and discussion, nurturing their innovative thinking and creativity. Throughout this process, teachers provide ample time for exploration, allowing students to grow in a free academic atmosphere. This approach effectively stimulates students' creative potential and cultivates them into future innovators.

Personalized care is a key element of transformational leadership theory, which requires leaders to possess excellent listening skills, keen observational abilities, and profound patience and perseverance. When faced with the diverse needs and situations of their subordinates, leaders must flexibly adjust their work plans to ensure optimal outcomes. This theory is equally applicable in the field of education. Transformational teachers must first possess the ability to tailor their teaching methods to the individual needs of their students. They should gain a deep understanding of each student's circumstances and adopt a flexible and varied approach to education that is targeted and purposeful. Through personalized guidance and support, teachers can help students fully realize their potential and achieve holistic development. Additionally, transformational teachers should be adept at employing motivating feedback language. They should actively encourage students, help them build self-confidence, and enable them to experience the joy of success. This positive feedback not only stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning but also empowers them with uplifting energy as they feel the care and love from their teachers. Through personalized care and motivational feedback, transformational teachers can create a nurturing environment filled with love and hope for their students' growth.

Based on the above analysis, the characteristics of teacher leadership can be categorized into corresponding dimensions for a better conceptual summary, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Characteristics of Teacher Leadership and Corresponding Dimensional Differentiation

Characteristics of Teacher Leadership	Dimension	Description
Idealized Influence	Personal Charisma	Demonstrates strong personal charisma through rich classroom content, fluent language expression, and humorous communication, earning admiration and respect from students
Intellectual Stimulation	Cultivation of Creative Thinking	Trains students in creative thinking, fostering new concepts and ideas, encouraging multi-perspective problem-solving, and utilizing various teaching methods
Inspirational Motivation	Vision and Mission	Instills vision and a sense of mission in students, cultivating pride and a positive optimistic attitude, granting students freedom and space, trusting their inherent potential and abilities
Personalized Care	Tailoring Teaching to Individual Needs	Deeply understands each student's circumstances, employs flexible and diverse teaching methods, provides targeted education, uses motivational feedback language, and helps students build confidence

4 CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and educational leadership in the teaching context, it is evident that both theories share a common fundamental goal: to understand and facilitate human development towards higher objectives. Maslow's theory emphasizes the importance of fulfilling basic needs before progressing towards higher goals, which aligns with the role of educators in nurturing students' fundamental skills and personal growth. Educational leaders, represented by teachers, not only impart knowledge but also cultivate motivation and character, thereby shaping students' academic achievements and social contributions. By integrating these theories, educators can improve teaching strategies, better support student progress, create a more enriching learning environment, and establish and achieve higher learning goals.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.

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