Dynamics of progressive leadership: exploring engagement and interpersonal communication in education

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Abstract The transformational educational leadership approach that inspires and motivates teams to achieve extraordinary results is not devoid of any challenges. Educational leaders must be progressive in innovation, inclusiveness, and adaptation to the changing times. They must skilfully communicate emerging challenges to help teams in the educational environment. Perception differences lead to conflicts, thus impacting team communication and collaboration, which in turn affects the achievement of organisational or institution's goals. This study aims to determine the role of interpersonal communication skills in progressive educational leadership and outline the patterns of interpersonal communication associated in progressive educational leadership. Through the use of narrative literature review methods, these studies show that educational leadership must be progressive in facing the challenges of changing times, and the need for interpersonal communication skills to make this happen. Interpersonal communication is an important element in progressive educational leadership. Many scholarly sources have been reviewed and analysed to support these findings. The study identifies key interpersonal communication skills in progressive educational leadership, such as active listening, clear messaging, empathy, respect for diversity, team collaboration facilitation, effective feedback provision, evidence-based communication, conflict resolution, and the ability to inspire and motivate staff and students. In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of interpersonal communication in progressive educational leadership.

Keywords: educational leadership; interpersonal communication; progressive leadership

INTRODUCTION

Educational leaders must be progressive in innovation, inclusiveness, and adaptation to the changing times. Progressive leadership encourages good cooperation among team members. Leaders create an environment where team members feel comfortable to express ideas, collaborate, and solve problems(Kafadar, 2022). This can build trust between leaders and team members, as well as among team members themselves, fostering a sense of support and value. Progressive leadership is a style that focuses on participation and cooperation with all parties in running an organisation or school (Day, Sammons, & Gorgen, 2020a).

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Leadership holds a significant role in an organisation as it functions as a command centre, a determinant of strategic direction, and a motivator for team members. Effective leadership is focused on how team members can work collaboratively to create change and achieve common objectives(Hornyak, Patterson, Orchard, & Allison, 2022). Schein explains that leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve organisational goals. Leaders also act as coaches and mentors, collaborating with team members by providing motivation and meeting their needs to achieve these objectives(Nguyen, Hang, Hiep, & Flynn, 2023). Leadership requires skills in implementing interpersonal communication, but many school principals do not have the best strategy or pattern to implement.

Educational leadership is the ability to influence those being led for the implementation of education, ensuring that the established educational goals are achieved effectively and efficiently in the school being managed (Kartika Sari, 2019; Nasution, Fakultas, Tarbiyah, Uin, & Medan, 2015). The success of educational leadership is determined by the educational leader's capability to manage the education system (Cohrs et al., 2020; Men, 2014b, 2014a; Nedzinskaitė-Mačiūnienė & Merkytė, 2019; Tian et al., 2020). Educational leadership encompasses all activities aimed at influencing others' will to achieve common goals in the field of education. The success or failure of an organisation in executing its mission is largely determined by the quality of leadership possessed by those entrusted with leadership tasks in the relevant institution.

Educational leadership today faces various complex challenges that require innovative and responsive approaches (Anzari & Pratiwi, 2021; Ylimaki, 2011). The progressive approach focuses on academic success and students' holistic development, emotional well-being, and technology integration (Elias, Parker, & Rosenblatt, 2007; Polat & Turhaner, 2024). The morality of leadership positively impacts the success of building progressive work engagement relationships (Wibowo & Alam, 2017). Engagement relationships create strong cooperation, mutual trust, and good communication. Good communication is challenging for leaders when facing or handling a problem (Sari, 2020). Challenges for a leader include facing distrust among members, poor communication, and differences in values and goals within the institution.

The first challenge in building engagement relationships is mistrust (Kornacki, Silversin, & Chokshi, 2019). Members within an educational institution might have doubts about each other's intentions and capabilities. In an institution lacking trust, individuals may expend more energy on self-preservation than on achieving the institution's goals (Bognitz, 2018). Progressive educational leaders must manage issues and earn their members' trust with good interpersonal communication skills. Ineffective communication can lead to misinterpretation or loss of messages, complicating the formation of engagement relationships.

Interpersonal communication skills are important for educational leaders. Effective interpersonal communication enables educational leaders to build positive relationships(Liu, 2019) (Masdarini, 2024), inspire and motivate staff (Luh Masdarini, Candiasa, Agustini, & Sudatha, 2024) (Wang, 2021), and create a conducive learning environment (Kurland, 2019). Leaders who have good interpersonal communication skills can manage conflict more effectively (Sabanci, Şahin, & Özdemir, 2018), provide constructive feedback (Kwiatkowski, 2019), and direct educational institutions toward success (Harapan & Fitria, 2021). Educational leaders' interpersonal communication failures can result in a variety of problems, including reduced performance, staff dissatisfaction, and the inability to achieve educational goals (Tekel & Erus, 2023). This paper focuses on the specific aspect of interpersonal communication within progressive educational leadership and how it influences on achieving educational goals.

Communication issues often occur within organisations or educational institutions (Keyton, 2017). Common issues include a lack of transparency in leadership, which erodes trust and affects quality communication (Meng, Pan, Cacciatore, & Sanchez, 2024). Differences in perception among team members, as a result of leadership communication, can lead to varying opinions and potentially to conflicts, thus impacting team communication and cooperation and the achievement of organisational goals (Newman, Ford, & Marshall, 2020). Trust is an essential part of fostering effective cooperation and communication in running an organisation well (Newell & Swan, 2000). Trust is a crucial factor in achieving organisational goals. Research reveals that trust has a strong influence on work motivation and job satisfaction within organisations (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Aziz et al., 2021; Shahid, 2018). Leaders need to cultivate empathy in a communicative way.

Differences in values, goals, and expectations among group members can cause conflicts and hinder engagement relationships within educational institutions (Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi, & Mojeed-Sanni, 2018). Problems arise due to individual differences such as age, gender, talent, beliefs, values, experiences, among others. This also includes limited resources. These conflicts negatively impact personnel performance and the overall harmony within the institution.

Education leadership greatly needs progressive leadership, one aspect of which is building team trust to ensure effective communication processes. Therefore, effective interpersonal communication methods are required in organisations or schools. While it is recognised that good interpersonal communication skills can foster a culture of respecting differences, there is a gap in understanding how leaders in educational institutions can systematically use these skills to address the psychological factors affecting engagement. This research aims to fill this gap by investigating specific interpersonal communication strategies that leaders can employ to enhance engagement and performance among personnel. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of psychological insights with practical communication techniques to create a comprehensive approach for improving collaboration and engagement within educational settings.

This study aims to explain the role of interpersonal communication skills in progressive educational leadership and to identify patterns of communication that facilitate effective leadership. This research seeks to provide insights into how interpersonal communication can enhance leadership effectiveness in educational settings by critically evaluating existing literature and identifying gaps in current knowledge. The findings will contribute to the broader scholarly discussion on educational leadership and offer practical applications for improving communication strategies in education.

METHODOLOGY

A narrative literature review is employed to offer a thorough analysis of the research. One type of study that provides a comprehensive, critical, essential, and impartial examination devoted only to a single topic is the narrative literature review (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). To bolster the study's conclusions, all pertinent research and data are looked at extensively, discussed, and evaluated. Without the requirement for field research, this study gathers data from library collection resources (books, journals, government papers, and articles).

The following are the steps to follow: 1) Gathering the supplies. 2) Examining the pertinent resources. 3) Documenting the sources. 4) Putting the ingredients together. 5) Handling the findings of materials study.

Most studies published in the recent ten years were presented and discussed. As a guide for this research, the question that emerged is: 'how does interpersonal communication work for progressive educational leaders to face the challenges of the times?'. Most of the journal literature was found in the databases such as Google Scholar, Eric, and Education Research. It used the terms 'interpersonal communication', 'transformational leadership', 'leadership communication effectiveness', 'staff engagement', and 'progressive educational leadership'. The researchers then synthesised this data to form a coherent narrative, revealing how interpersonal communication affects the effectiveness of leadership in the context of progressive educational leadership. As this is a narrative literature review, the selection criteria for this study were based on relevance, validity, reliability. Studies which met these criteria were included to arrive at a more comprehensive finding.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Engagement and Interpersonal Communication in Educational Institutions

Work culture and job satisfaction have a positive impact on work productivity, both simultaneously and partially (Luturmas, 2017; Ramadhani, Badriatin, & Rinandiyana, 2021). Leaders must maintain performance, and this can be achieved through team involvement in goal accomplishment, managing results, and addressing individual needs (Driyantini, Pramukaningtiyas, & Agustiani, 2020). Engagement relationships in educational institutions are a key element in creating a positive and productive work culture. Academic institutions with strong engagement relationships tend to be more competitive, have more enthusiastic team members, and achieve better results.

Building engagement relationships in educational institutions is essential to ensure quality education and positive growth of students. Engagement relationships in educational institutions encompass interactions between students, teachers, parents, and other educational staff; without social interaction, there can be no communal life. This creates an atmosphere that is safe, supportive, and inclusive, that allows students to feel valued and supported in the learning process (Jiang & Lu, 2020). It is based on mutual trust, understanding, and individual feelings that they are an important part of the educational institution's success.

Work engagement generally involves the functioning between work resources, personal resources, and job demands (Mazzetti et al., 2021). Work resources refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of work that can reduce job demands and associated physiological and psychological costs, functioning in achieving work goals and stimulating growth, learning, and personal development. This is key to creating a strong emotional bond among all parties involved, allowing for academic growth, character development, and overall well-being.

Communication explains relationships among humans and their interaction with the world around them. Thus, communication explains the union with or union together with–becoming one with or together with (Liliweri, 2010). Achieving effective communication requires a wide range of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills (Napitupulu, 2019). Interpersonal communication skills are necessary abilities in building relationships and communication capabilities with others (Oviyanti, 2017; Prasetyo & Anwar, 2021; Pratiwi, Prasetyo, & Shabrina, 2021). Interpersonal communication in educational leadership encompasses various aspects, such as listening, speaking clearly, providing feedback, and understanding individuals. However, the authors suggest that there are practical interpersonal communication patterns for educational leaders to implement.

Become A Progressive Educational Leadership
Leadership is related to Ariratana (Ariratana, Sirisookslip, & Ngang, 2015) an individual's ability to lead, influence, and direct team members to achieve specific goals within an organisation. In the field of education, for instance, the school principal plays a crucial role as both a leader and manager, significantly influencing the dynamics of the school to achieve success and enhance the school's quality (Kupila, Fonsén, & Liinamaa, 2023). Elementary School Principals hold a vital position in determining the policy direction to achieve success at the primary school level(Narimo, Sutama, & Hidayati, 2021). Leadership is the most effective and efficient approach to achieve goals through team collaboration within an organisation. Organisations or schools require leaders who possess knowledge and dynamism to bring progress to the institutions they lead (Narimo et al., 2021). Achieving success and quality in schools requires leaders capable of maintaining relationships with school members through leadership roles, values, culture, and attitudes. A leader needs the support and assistance of team members in achieving goals.
Schools need leadership that can keep up with technological and informational developments, where positive values are part of the process of advancing the school(Demirbilek & Keser, 2022). Leadership practices that effectively utilise technology are crucial to keep pace with the times (Jameson et al., 2022). Facing these challenges requires a progressive leader, a leader who takes innovative steps necessary for the advancement of the school(Nath Panta & Chandra Luitel, 2022).

Transformational leadership is a leadership style in which the leader works with a team to identify needed changes, creates a vision to guide the change through inspiration, and executes those changes alongside committed team members (Cohrs et al., 2020; Men, 2014a, 2014b; Tian et al., 2020). Transformational leadership focuses on deep and significant changes in educational organisations, meanwhile, progressive educational leadership emphasises an approach that is adaptive, inclusive and responsive to changing times. So, a progressive approach is needed that not only focuses on academic success but also on students' holistic development, emotional well-being, and technology integration.

Progressive educational leadership is a leadership model that focuses on innovation, change, and development within the education system (Ylimaki, 2011). This type of leadership aims to improve the quality of education, provide equal opportunities for all students, and develop the leadership and skills of teachers (Dwi Susanti, Joko Prayitno, Haryanto, & Muhibbin,

2023). Progressive educational leadership plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of education and helping students optimally achieve their potential. Progressive leadership is defined as a way of thinking and acting that is forward-thinking, open-minded, and human-centred (Cline & Necochea, 2000).

In progressive educational leadership, leaders have a deep understanding of education and adopt a proactive approach in leading and managing schools (Day, Gu, & Sammons, 2016). They encourage teachers and school staff to adopt innovative approaches in teaching and learning, utilise educational technology, and collaborate with the community and industry. Progressive educational leadership also promotes values such as fairness, inclusivity, and diversity in education. With this, the leaders strive to create a safe, welcoming, and inclusive environment for all students and facilitate collaboration and cooperation among students, teachers, parents, and the community (Day, Sammons, & Gorgen, 2020b).

From various findings about progressive educational leaders, the authors suggest the progressive character of educational leaders. Progressive educational leadership emphasises innovation, inclusiveness, and adaptation to changing times. This approach focuses on lifelong learning, empowering all stakeholders, and creating an environment that supports creativity and collaboration. Progressive leaders strive to build systems that are responsive to the changing needs of students and society. In short, it can be seen in the following diagram in Figure 1.
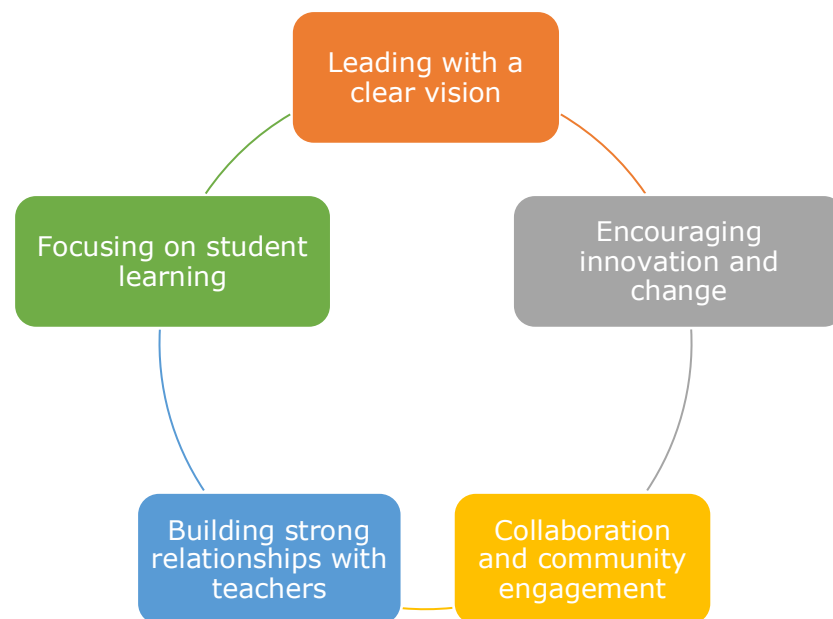
Figure 1. Characteristics of Progressive Leadership
Source: Data Processing by Author (2024)

Progressive educational leaders have a clear vision of the future of education and how to achieve it. They set ambitious goals and work diligently towards achieving them. These leaders encourage teachers and school staff to think creatively, adopt the latest practices, and seek new ways to enhance teaching and learning. Progressive educational leaders focus on student needs and strive to create an environment that supports effective and meaningful learning. They support the development of students' skills and independence. Progressive educational leaders collaborate with teachers, students, parents, and the community to achieve educational goals and improve the quality of education. They value the contributions of each stakeholder and create opportunities for them to be involved in decision-making. These leaders regularly interact with teachers, providing the necessary support, feedback, and training. They value teachers' views and ideas and work together with them to achieve positive change.

Educational leadership involves various aspects, such as curriculum planning, school management, staff development, and interactions with students, parents, and the community. In all these areas, good interpersonal communication skills are key to creating strong and productive relationships.

Interpersonal Communication Skills in Progressive Educational Leadership

Educational leadership and communication skills can enhance the effectiveness of education (Bindu D, 2021)(Prasetyo & Anwar, 2021). According to Kwiatkowski interpersonal communication skills refer to an individual's ability to communicate in a group, both verbally and non-verbally (Kwiatkowski, 2019). Individuals with effective interpersonal communication skills are sensitive to the feelings and emotions of others around them.

Furthermore, Julia T. Wood in the communication theory she developed, emphasised that communication is a dynamic process that involves the exchange of symbols to create meaning in different social contexts. Wood's theory emphasises the importance of interpersonal relationships in the communication process. The quality of the relationship between communicators can influence the effectiveness of communication, where trust and deep understanding between individuals improve the quality of information exchange. This theory helps us to be more effective in communicating by paying attention to context, interpersonal relationships, as well as ethical and power aspects in every interaction (Bonnie J. Dow & Julia T. Wood, 2006).

Following Woods' theory, interpersonal communication skills for progressive educational leaders include: being a good listener, speaking clearly to ensure the message is understood, having empathy for various needs and perspectives, respecting and understanding diversity in culture, language, and background, facilitating collaboration among educational staff, teachers, and other stakeholders to achieve common goals, providing constructive feedback to staff and teachers to foster their development, basing communication on relevant evidence and data to support good decision-making, being transparent in policies, goals, and decisions made, adeptly resolving conflicts through effective communication, and being able to inspire and motivate staff and students to reach their best potential (Bonnie J. Dow & Julia T. Wood, 2006). Effective educational leadership requires the ability to understand and respond to the needs, feelings, and perspectives of individuals in the educational community. A successful principal listens to students facing personal problems and provides the necessary support to help them overcome difficulties. At times, educational institution leaders need to learn to negotiate with teaching staff, students, or parents when making decisions that affect the educational community(Latifah, 2022). Educational leaders can provide constructive and helpful feedback that assists students, teachers, and educational staff in self-improvement.

Educational leaders must be able to convey information clearly and effectively to students, teachers, educational staff, and parents (Amin, 2022). Opening channels for open and honest communication allows everyone to feel heard and attended to. Furthermore, good listening is an essential part of effective interpersonal communication. Educational leaders need to value others' viewpoints and give full attention while communicating. Educational leadership also faces conflicts (Jazirotunnada, 2023). Good conflict resolution skills help minimise negative impacts and create solutions satisfying all parties involved.

Progressive educational leaders must strive to adapt their communication to the demands and challenges of disruption to achieve educational goals (Ulfah, 2022). In the digital era, educational leaders need to master online communication skills and understand the impact of technology on education (Purnawanto, 2021). Educational leaders must be familiar with educational technology and digital tools used in learning. They should ensure that their teachers and students can maximise the benefits of these tools to enhance teaching and learning.

From various findings about Communication Skills in Progressive Educational Leadership, the authors suggest Interpersonal Communication Skills patterns for educational leaders. In short, it can be seen in the following diagram figure 2.
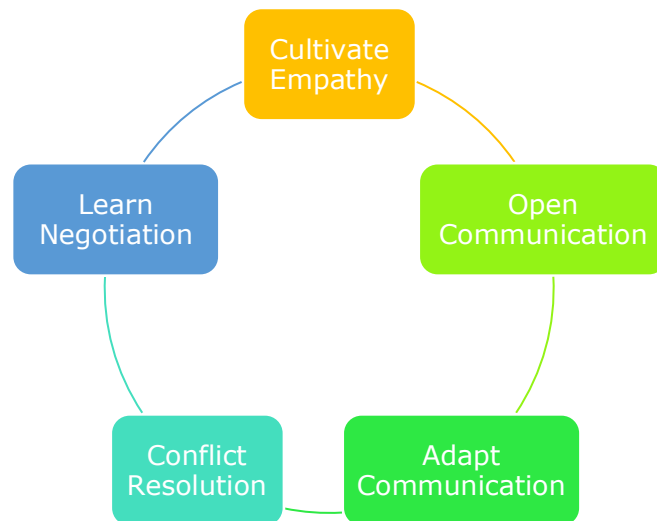
Figure 2. Interpersonal Communication Skills of Progressive Educational Leaders pattern
Source: Data Processing by Author (2024)

With good interpersonal communication skills, progressive education leaders can create a supportive environment, facilitate growth, and achieve progressive and inclusive learning goals. Interpersonal communication skills enable leaders to listen empathetically and understand diverse perspectives, allowing policies and actions to be adjusted appropriately. These skills play a crucial role in the context of progressive education leadership, enabling leaders to build positive relationships. Additionally, interpersonal communication skills empower leaders to cultivate effective teams, manage conflicts, and facilitate productive discussions to attain progressive education objectives. Leaders can inspire and motivate others to support the vision, fostering consensus in the pursuit of progressive changes. The ability to handle conflicts wisely, facilitate constructive dialogues, and seek solutions that advance progressive education goals is also facilitated by interpersonal communication skills. Leaders with strong interpersonal communication skills can adapt to changes, articulate the reasons behind these changes, and embrace active participation from all stakeholders. By following and practising this pattern of interpersonal communication skills, it is likely that it will be easier for educational leaders to become progressive educational leaders.

CONCLUSION
Building engagement relationships in educational institutions requires dedication and effort, but the benefits are significant. Educational institutions with strong engagement relationships will be better prepared to face challenges and achieve long-term success. By employing the right interpersonal communication skills, educational institutions can create an environment that supports student success and mutual growth. Interpersonal communication skills in progressive educational leadership include being a good listener, speaking clearly to ensure the message is understood, having empathy, appreciating and understanding diversity in culture, language, and background, facilitating collaboration among teams, being able to provide feedback, basing communication on relevant evidence and data, adeptly resolving conflicts through effective communication, and being able to inspire and motivate staff and students to reach their best potential. Interpersonal communication patterns in progressive educational leadership include open communication, negotiation, conflict resolution, and collaboration to achieve goals. The implication of this research is understanding how to communicate interpersonally while executing progressive leadership in education.

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