

Leadership, Modernization, and Performance: Enhancing Private School Outcomes in Jiangxi, China

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Abstract

This article examines the determinants of private school performance in Jiangxi, China through a frame work that emphasizes phenomena such as educational modernization and reform. This research utilizes an empirical study based on a survey conducted among educational administrators and it uses Structural Equation Modeling to investigate the relationships between authentic leadership; knowledge management strategies, technical innovation as well as their impacts on school performance. Results reveal that authentic leadership and technology integration have a direct impact on educational modernization, which subsequently affects school performance. Knowledge management has no direct impact on performance, but the path through modernisation is very strong. Finally, the study underscores that a comprehensive strategy covering leadership development, technology adoption and knowledge management is essential to result in modernization of private education with improved educational outcomes.

Keywords: Leadership, Modernization, Performance, Private School

Introduction

Public choice in China is an unsalable public good, completely transformed under the new social economy and impetus of high quality education (Romanovskiy & Romanovska, 2020). Private schools have long been part of the educational landscape in Jiangxi, offering choice to Chinese parents who are not always satisfied with public education that is associated with one-size-fits-all teaching. Still, there is nothing automatic about the survival let alone success of these privately run institutions and much will depend on their leadership as well as what they know how to do with technology.

It has three targeted issues private school performance in Jiangxi and its determinants, factors affecting educational modernization (which is the core intermediate variable that changes total result of a school) by geographical dimension —coverage, loads or contents— and some

ideas to learn from kids' schools. It focuses on the linkage between leadership, technology as well as knowledge management so that school administrators and policy makers are able to come up with strategies which can help them improve quality of education in private schools (Nambissan & Ball, 2020).

Public education in China has undergone substantial changes in response to socio-economic developments, and private education has emerged as a significant alternative. In Jiangxi Province, private schools serve as critical entities offering diverse educational choices that cater to various parental expectations. As competition intensifies, private schools face the dual challenges of maintaining their market position while delivering high-quality education that meets the evolving needs of students and parents. The demand for effective school leadership and the integration of modern educational practices have become increasingly paramount. Research indicates that successful school performance in this context relies heavily on educational modernization and reform strategies tailored to specific regional and cultural nuances (Liu & Zhao, 2023).

Educational modernization is a dynamic process encompassing updates to curricula, teaching methodologies, and the adoption of advanced technologies to better prepare students for future challenges. In private schools in Jiangxi, modernization efforts often focus on integrating digital tools and platforms to enhance the learning experience and facilitate personalized education. This transformation is driven by the need to remain competitive in a market where public schools are also adopting innovative practices. Recent studies have shown that technological adoption significantly impacts school performance by improving both teaching efficacy and student outcomes (Wang et al., 2021). As such, modernization is not just a desirable goal but a necessary strategy for schools looking to differentiate themselves in a crowded educational landscape.

The role of leadership in driving educational modernization cannot be overstated. Authentic leadership, characterized by transparency, ethical behavior, and a commitment to shared values, is particularly effective in fostering an environment conducive to learning and innovation. Leaders in private schools who demonstrate authentic leadership are more likely to gain the trust and collaboration of their staff, which is essential for implementing successful modernization initiatives. A study by Zhang and Li (2022) emphasizes that authentic leadership directly influences school culture and performance by promoting a sense of shared purpose and continuous improvement. This leadership style is especially crucial in environments where schools operate under competitive pressures and need to build a strong reputation based on educational excellence.

Knowledge management (KM) strategies also play a pivotal role in the modernization and performance of private schools. Effective KM involves the systematic collection, organization, and sharing of knowledge to enhance learning and administrative functions. In the context of Jiangxi's private schools, KM can lead to significant improvements in curriculum development, resource management, and strategic planning. However, the impact of KM on performance is often indirect, serving more as a facilitator for other processes such as technological integration and leadership development. According to Li et al. (2023), KM strategies provide the infrastructure necessary for schools to adapt quickly to changes and implement modernization efforts more effectively.

While modernization and leadership are key drivers of school performance, the interaction between these elements is complex and multifaceted. Educational modernization serves as an intermediary variable that mediates the effects of leadership, technology, and KM on school outcomes. This study posits that modernization efforts, when aligned with strong leadership and robust KM strategies, can significantly enhance the overall performance of private schools. However, modernization alone is not sufficient; it must be supported by a comprehensive strategy that integrates leadership development, technological adoption, and knowledge management. The findings of this research underscore the importance of a holistic approach to school management that addresses both the micro-level dynamics within schools and the macro-level trends in the broader educational environment (Chen & Guo, 2024).

Research Objectives (RO)

1. **RO1:** To examine the impact of authentic leadership on the performance of private schools in Jiangxi, China.
2. **RO2:** To investigate the role of technological integration in enhancing educational outcomes and school performance.
3. **RO3:** To analyze the effectiveness of knowledge management strategies in supporting educational modernization and its indirect effects on school performance in private schools in Jiangxi, China.

Research Questions (RQ):

1. **RQ1:** What is the impact of authentic leadership on the performance of private schools in Jiangxi, China?
2. **RQ2:** What role does technological integration play in enhancing educational outcomes and school performance in private schools in Jiangxi?
3. **RQ3:** What are the effects of knowledge management strategies on educational modernization of private schools in Jiangxi, China?

Literature Review

Authentic leadership which is more tied with high transparency, stronger ethical behavior and deeper commitment to organizational values has been strongly pointed by majority as critical for the organization success. There is the widely held belief among those who work in education that authentic leadership is essential to creating a culture of learning, leading and teaching which can generate higher levels of both individual and organizational performance. When administered authentically, leadership increases staff trust and collaboration—key elements necessary to realize successful high educational outcomes (Griffiths et al., 2021). Especially in the case of private schools circumstances already complex become extraordinary ones particular as more and more operate within competitive environment where leadership quality has a direct influence on school reputation/performance.

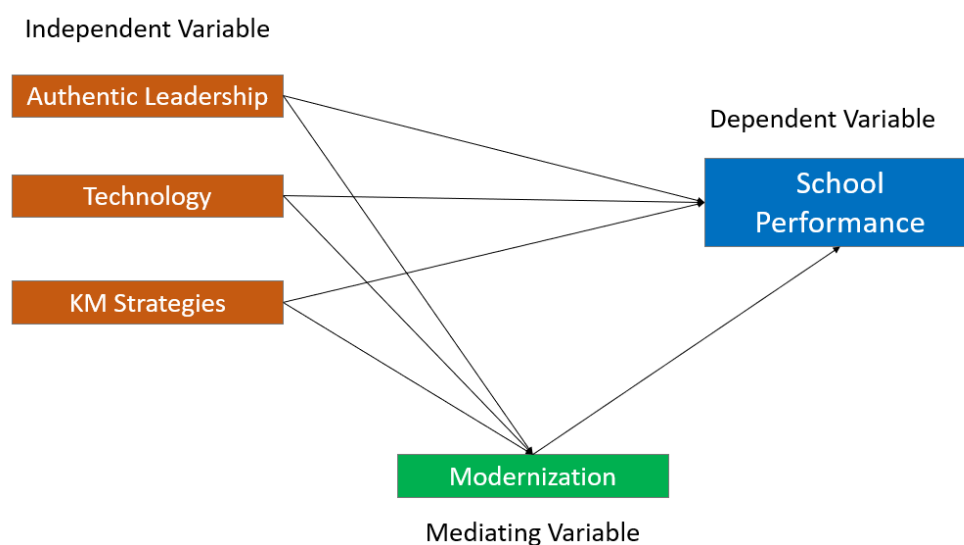
In educational institutions KM involves the systematic management of knowledge in order to improve learning, teaching and administrative functions (Oktari et al., 2020). The ability to capture, collect, organize and share information within an enterprise for the purpose of improving that organization's efficiency Knowledge Management Private schools that user KM strategy, could greatly improve in curriculum development as well managing resources and strategic planning all of which are critical to maintaining a high level performance. Yet

the effect of KM on school performance tends to be more indirect, namely in helping other processes —modernization and reform— take place.

Tech Trends That Could Transform Education Technological progress is universally recognized as a driver of educational modernization that has made it easy for schools to change their instructional practices, and helps in the efficient running an institution, thus ensuring comprehensive communication lines with important stakeholders. It is important to point out that technology integration in education helps not only individualized learning, but also supports the modernization of curricula and teaching-learning strategies (Pascaru, 2023).

Jiangxi's private schools also use technology as a way of distinguishing themselves from public peers — by introducing inventive ways to educate students that accommodate the wide variety of student needs. Use of technology is also associated with higher school achievement where it provides for more efficient resource use and student engagement improvements. Simply, educational modernization refers to the updating of different measures taken in reforming education for current levels and also global situations where children have been into. Modernization efforts in the private schools are usually geared towards introducing new technological tools, employ unconventional teaching methods and realign curriculum with global benchmarks (Boss & Krauss, 2022). The study posits that modernization is an intermediary variable which mediates between leadership style, technology type and KM strategy and their impact on school performance.

Conceptual Framework



Methodology

In order to investigate the relationships of authentic leadership, knowledge management, technological advancement and school effectiveness with educational modernization as mediating variable; this study follows a quantitative research design. To collect the data from 248 educational administrators in secondary private schools of Jiangxi Province, The researchers used a structured questionnaire. The survey measured leadership practices, KM activities, technology use and several school performance indicators.

The study conducted Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) between the independent and outcome variables to test for direct and indirect influences of each predictors on school

performance. SEM was selected because it allows us to model complex relationships between several variables and examine the mediating role of modernization.

Findings and Discussion

The SEM analysis revealed several important findings regarding the relationships between the key variables in this study. Below is a detailed discussion of these findings, supported by a summary table that outlines the path coefficients and significance levels.

Table 1

Summary of Path Coefficients and Significance Levels

Path	Path Coefficient	P-Value	Significance
Authentic Leadership → School Performance	0.731	0.000	Significant
Technology → School Performance	0.562	0.000	Significant
KM Strategies → School Performance	0.085	0.225	Not Significant
Technology → Modernization	0.781	0.000	Significant
Authentic Leadership → Modernization	0.645	0.000	Significant
KM Strategies → Modernization	0.112	0.115	Marginally Not Significant
Modernization → School Performance	0.006	0.919	Not Significant

The analysis shows a significant positive effect of authentic leadership on school effectiveness. The path coefficient of 0.731 ($p < 0.001$) shows the strong effect size between leadership and performance, with schools led by authentic leaders tending towards higher levels of performance than those in which these conditions were not met. These results are in line with the literature regarding educational leadership, which suggests that school leaders influence both culture of their schools and extend to success.

A path coefficient of 0.562 ($p < 0.001$) has also been obtained for the technology with a profound influence on school performance as well Table 1 This finding highlights the need to blend technology with teaching, which in turn directly impacts on better performance outcomes. Further, the positive and significant pathway from technology to modernisation (path coefficient = 0.781; $p < .001$) reflected its important function in predicting contemporary educational practice or else it becomes essential in order for universities not losing competitiveness of educational market...

In contrast to leadership and technology, KM strategies do not directly affect school performance (path coefficient = 0.085; $p = 0.225$). Yet, the relationship between KM and modernization is somewhat paradoxical. Modernization exhibits only a marginally significant direct effect on school performance (path coefficient = 0.006, $p = 0.919$), implying it is more of an indirect mediator than that simple predictor suggested above Although modernization in itself is important as a means of bringing the institution up to speed with current educational standards, its impact on performance will occur indirectly through changes such as leadership and technology integration. It is an indication that schools not only need to

prioritize their modernization efforts, but also how best these efforts connect with broader strategic initiatives.

In further examining the relationship between leadership, technology, and modernization, it is important to consider the contextual realities unique to Jiangxi's private schools. Authentic leadership, as demonstrated in this study, plays a pivotal role in shaping school culture and driving performance. Leaders who exhibit transparency, ethical behavior, and a commitment to shared values are able to foster an environment that encourages collaboration and continuous improvement. This is especially critical in a region like Jiangxi, where private schools face significant competition from both public institutions and other private entities. By cultivating trust and a clear sense of purpose, authentic leaders are better equipped to implement modernization initiatives effectively, ensuring that the school remains competitive and aligned with global educational standards.

Moreover, technological integration is increasingly viewed as a cornerstone of educational modernization, not just in Jiangxi but globally. The results of this study underscore the direct impact that technology has on school performance, particularly in how it enhances teaching efficacy and student outcomes. However, technology adoption is not merely about adding digital tools to the curriculum; it requires a thoughtful strategy that aligns with the school's broader objectives. Private schools in Jiangxi must carefully consider how technology can be integrated into teaching methods to meet the diverse needs of students. This includes leveraging data-driven insights to personalize learning, as well as utilizing digital platforms to facilitate communication between teachers, students, and parents. In this context, technology serves as a vehicle for modernization, enabling schools to offer innovative educational experiences that differentiate them from public counterparts.

Lastly, while knowledge management (KM) strategies may not show a direct effect on performance, their indirect role as facilitators of modernization cannot be ignored. KM helps schools organize and disseminate critical information that can inform decision-making, curriculum development, and resource management. The marginal significance of KM's impact on modernization, as shown in the findings, suggests that schools may need to refine how they implement KM strategies to fully capitalize on their potential benefits. By fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and continuous learning, private schools in Jiangxi can position themselves as dynamic institutions that are adaptable to changes in the educational landscape. When KM is integrated with strong leadership and technological infrastructure, it creates a synergistic effect that enhances modernization efforts, ultimately contributing to improved school performance.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study carry several important implications for school administrators, policymakers, and educational leaders in Jiangxi's private schools. First and foremost, the study underscores the pivotal role that authentic leadership plays in driving school performance and modernization. Leaders who embrace transparency, ethical decision-making, and shared values are more likely to foster a positive school culture that enhances staff collaboration and student engagement. The implication here is that leadership development programs should focus on cultivating these qualities in school administrators to ensure long-term success. Schools that prioritize leadership as a core competency will not

only improve performance but also create a foundation for sustained innovation and adaptation in an evolving educational landscape.

Additionally, the study highlights the critical role of technological integration in enhancing school outcomes. Schools that effectively integrate technology into their curriculum and administrative processes are better positioned to deliver personalized learning experiences and improve student outcomes. However, the broader implication is that technological adoption should not be a one-size-fits-all approach. Schools must carefully assess their specific needs and the local context to determine which technologies will be most effective in supporting their educational goals. Policymakers should support these efforts by providing resources, training, and infrastructure to facilitate seamless technological integration, ensuring that schools can leverage these tools to their fullest potential.

The marginal significance of knowledge management (KM) strategies on performance suggests that while KM is essential, it is not a standalone solution. The implication here is that KM strategies must be embedded within a broader framework that includes leadership and technological integration. Schools should not view KM as merely a tool for managing information but as a dynamic process that supports continuous learning, innovation, and strategic planning. By doing so, schools can create an environment where knowledge flows freely across the institution, enhancing decision-making processes and improving educational outcomes over time.

To improve the performance of private schools in Jiangxi, several recommendations can be drawn from the study. First, leadership development should be prioritized, with a focus on promoting authentic leadership. School administrators should receive targeted training on transparency, ethical decision-making, and shared values to help them cultivate a positive school culture. This could be achieved through workshops, mentorship programs, and leadership training seminars, supported by local educational authorities and private school associations.

Second, schools must develop a comprehensive strategy for integrating technology into their teaching and administrative processes. This includes not only the acquisition of digital tools but also the development of digital literacy among teachers and students. Schools should consider partnering with educational technology providers to implement customized solutions that meet their specific needs. Additionally, teachers should be trained on how to use technology effectively in the classroom to enhance learning experiences and boost student engagement.

Third, private schools should refine their knowledge management strategies to better align with modernization efforts. This could involve creating knowledge-sharing platforms, encouraging collaboration across departments, and implementing continuous professional development programs. By building a strong KM infrastructure, schools can ensure that the knowledge generated within the institution is effectively utilized to improve performance and support long-term modernization.

Lastly, policymakers should play a supportive role in providing the necessary resources, infrastructure, and policy frameworks to facilitate these changes. Government initiatives

should focus on enhancing access to technology in schools, offering leadership development programs, and promoting the adoption of KM practices across the education sector. By fostering a collaborative environment between public and private sectors, Jiangxi's private schools can continue to improve and remain competitive in a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Conclusion

With the central thrust on pathway of educational modernization, this study investigates into a new strategy in private school performance by way of analyzing from both micro- and macro-levels perspective factors at play through which primary fostering determinant contributes to success for private schools as found in Jiangxi, China. The results of the study underscore authentic leadership and technological integration as fundamental elements to improve school performance. It is not a driver of performance in the classical sense but its modernizing auxiliary function has been made obvious.

The message for schools administrators and policymakers from this study is clear: fixing private school performance requires a comprehensive solution (leadership plus technology – with knowledge management), it cannot be treated as an 'isolated island. Schools that focus on these areas will not only increase their performance but also position themselves to be more competitive and adaptable amid the shifting demands of students in a globalized educational environment.

In this study, researchers focused on two moderator variables (i.e., cultural distance, geographic span) to explore these complex relationships between contextual factors; however the role modernization might play as mediator was a missing link among them. Moreover, qualitative work could further illuminate how these processes happen on the ground in schools to provide deeper practical guidance for service providers.

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