

Developing a Performance-Based Educational Leadership Competency Development Model with a Futures Studies Approach: A Systematic Meta-Synthesis of International Studies

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1. Round 1

1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

In the Introduction, the statement “the role of educational managers has shifted from administrative management toward guiding learning processes and innovation” requires a stronger theoretical grounding and historical contextualization. The authors should distinguish between instructional leadership, transformational leadership, distributed leadership, and learner-centered leadership, because the manuscript currently treats these paradigms as interchangeable constructs despite important conceptual differences recognized in the educational leadership literature.

The paragraph beginning with “In the Iranian education system, upstream documents such as the Fundamental Reform Document of Education and the 1404 Vision...” would benefit from a clearer explanation of how national policy documents

concretely influence competency development mechanisms. The discussion remains descriptive and policy-oriented without identifying measurable implications for leadership competencies, implementation strategies, or institutional accountability structures.

The manuscript claims that the final model contains “9 stable axial categories,” but no intercoder reliability statistics or coding validation procedures are reported. Since qualitative synthesis heavily depends on interpretive coding, the authors should report agreement coefficients, reviewer triangulation procedures, or audit strategies to demonstrate analytical trustworthiness.

In the Findings section, several categories lack frequency values in Table 2, including “Transformational and Innovative Educational Leadership” and “Learner-Oriented and Development-Oriented Leadership.” This inconsistency creates ambiguity regarding comparative weighting among themes. The table should be revised to ensure completeness and methodological consistency.

The manuscript repeatedly refers to “Causal, Executive, and Contextual” levels, but the theoretical rationale for this three-level structure is underdeveloped. The authors should explain whether these levels emerged inductively from the data or were imposed deductively based on an existing theoretical framework. Without this clarification, the architecture of the final model appears arbitrary.

The paragraph beginning with “The final model is based on 9 key axes...” lacks analytical depth because it primarily restates findings rather than explaining interrelationships among dimensions. The manuscript would significantly improve if the authors elaborated on causal pathways, mediating relationships, and dynamic interactions between strategic leadership, organizational culture, and data-driven decision-making.

The manuscript frequently employs normative language such as “effective educational leaders are those who have the power to integrate data, decision, and culture toward improving learning.” Such claims require stronger empirical justification. The authors should avoid prescriptive statements unless supported by robust comparative evidence across the included studies.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

In the sentence “performance is considered a composite indicator of individual and organizational learning,” the manuscript introduces a central construct without operational definition. The authors should clearly define “performance-based educational leadership” and explain whether performance refers to student achievement, institutional effectiveness, teacher professional growth, organizational learning, stakeholder satisfaction, or a multidimensional index integrating these indicators.

In the Research Background section, the sentence “International research has demonstrated that the performance of educational leaders has a positive and significant relationship with the quality of student learning” is overly generalized. The manuscript should critically discuss contradictory or weak-effect findings in the literature, especially studies showing indirect or mediated relationships between leadership and student outcomes, in order to avoid confirmation bias and provide a balanced synthesis.

The manuscript repeatedly uses inconsistent author names and citation spellings. For example, “Lipardo & Coangelo (2020)” in the text differs from “Lepardo Jr & Caingcoy (2020)” in the reference list. Similarly, “Dimitriou et al. (2024)” and “Demetroulis et al. (2024)” appear interchangeably. These inconsistencies raise concerns regarding citation accuracy and literature verification. All author names, publication years, and citations must be carefully standardized.

In the Methodology section, the sentence “Meta-synthesis helps decision-making and care to be carried out based on scientific evidence and research findings and facilitates the use of qualitative research in the health field” appears unrelated to educational leadership research and seems directly transferred from healthcare literature. The authors should revise this paragraph to contextualize meta-synthesis specifically within educational and organizational research rather than healthcare applications.

The manuscript states that “more than 145 articles were reviewed,” yet no PRISMA-style flowchart is provided. A transparent screening diagram illustrating identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages is necessary to enhance methodological rigor and reproducibility. The absence of such a diagram weakens the credibility of the selection process.

In Step 2 of the methodology, the authors mention that the “research population included all scientific-research documents published between 2015 and 2025 in the field of cognitive sciences that addressed performance-based educational leadership competencies.” The phrase “field of cognitive sciences” appears conceptually inconsistent with the educational leadership focus of the study. The authors should clarify whether this is a typographical error or explain the relevance of cognitive sciences to the inclusion framework.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 1 are insufficiently detailed. For example, the criterion “non-credible articles” is highly subjective and methodologically problematic. The manuscript should specify objective quality indicators such as peer-review status, journal indexing, citation thresholds, methodological transparency, or appraisal tools used to evaluate study quality.

The sentence “the trend of changes in these studies was examined using Google Trends software” is methodologically unclear and scientifically weak. Google Trends is not an accepted bibliometric analysis tool for systematic reviews or meta-syntheses. The authors must justify its use, explain the analytical procedure, and clarify how trend analysis contributed to study selection or conceptual synthesis.

In Table 2, there is duplication and conceptual overlap between “Analytical Leadership and Educational Knowledge” and “Analytical and Knowledge-Based Educational Leadership.” These categories appear semantically redundant and compromise the internal coherence of the coding framework. The authors should either merge these categories or provide a detailed justification for their conceptual distinction.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

2. Revised

Editor’s decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief’s decision: Accepted.