

Proactive Leadership in School Administration for Enhancing Teachers' Proactive Work Behavior

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Abstract

This conceptual article synthesizes the literature on proactive leadership in school administration and examines its implications for enhancing teachers' proactive work behavior. Amid increasingly complex and dynamic educational environments, school administration requires leadership approaches that move beyond reactive management toward anticipatory and developmental practice. The article draws on an integrative review of literature on proactive leadership, proactive school management, empowering leadership, work meaningfulness, organizational support, and teacher proactivity. The synthesis suggests that proactive leadership plays an important role in shaping the organizational conditions under which teachers are more likely to initiate change, engage in adaptive problem solving, and extend their work beyond routine expectations. Specifically, proactive leadership appears to strengthen teachers' proactive work behavior by creating supportive professional conditions, enhancing perceived work meaningfulness, and legitimizing initiative, shared responsibility, and proactive action. The article further argues that proactive leadership should be theorized not merely as a personal leadership quality, but as an administrative orientation embedded in school structures, communication patterns, and professional relationships. From this perspective, teachers' proactive work behavior is better understood as a contextually enabled form of professional agency rather than a purely dispositional trait. The article concludes that proactive leadership provides a useful conceptual foundation for rethinking school administration in ways that enhance teacher agency and promote sustainable school improvement.

Keywords: Proactive Leadership; School Administration; Teachers' Proactive Work Behavior

Introduction

Rapid change, uncertainty, and increasing organizational complexity are increasingly influencing educational administration. Under these conditions, school leaders should not only run the daily business but also be able to foresee challenges, equip institutions to embrace change, and establish an environment that will facilitate ongoing improvement. In this regard, proactive leadership has become a significant lens to comprehend how leadership can empower educational settings by promoting progressive and development-focused practice (Ben Mohamed, 2025; Mosal & Base, 2025). Instead of focusing on responding to problems when they arise, proactive leadership lays more emphasis on anticipation, preparation and the building of institutional capacity before problems escalate.

This change at the school level is closely connected with teachers' proactive work behavior. Modern schools need teachers not only to carry out the tasks that are given to them but also to act as initiators of improvement, change agents and those who react positively to new issues. Previous research shows that the proactive work behavior of teachers is positively linked to supportive leadership and organizational factors, such as ethical work climate, perceived organizational support, work meaningfulness, and proactive school management (Kadiyono & Wardhani, 2024; Koçak & Tosun, 2023; Pradesa et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2022). Similar studies also indicate that facilitative leadership styles are likely to promote innovation, engagement, and initiative, which in turn increases the likelihood of proactive work behavior developing in the workplace (Bai et al., 2022). Proactive orientations have also been associated with more robust engagement, self-efficacy, and adaptive functioning in educational contexts more generally, which supports the idea that proactivity is not marginal to educational practice but rather increasingly central to it (Chen et al., 2021).

Despite the growth in the literature on proactivity in education, the literature on proactivity and leadership, teacher behavior, organizational support, student support, and school improvement remains fragmented. Another related literature in higher education has explored proactive support systems, including psychosocial support, coping-oriented guidance, and proactive advising, which all highlight anticipation and early intervention over a delayed response (Mogashana & Basitere, 2021; Ploysopon et al., 2023; Rothwell & Shields, 2021; Rust & Willey, 2024; Van Jura & Prieto, 2021). In addition, proactive orientations have been shown to contribute to larger developmental outcomes including adaptability, resilience, and future-directed agency (Eşkisu, 2021; Mercan & Öztemel, 2023). These studies, combined, indicate that proactivity is an applicable theme at educational levels, yet a more explicit conceptual synthesis is required to clarify how proactive leadership in school management can have a particular impact on the proactive work behavior of teachers. The article also addresses the need for greater conceptual clarity regarding proactive leadership and its relationship to related



leadership approaches, as well as the relationship between proactive work behavior and innovative work behavior. Thus, the purpose of the paper is to summarize the main ideas and literature related to proactive leadership in school administration and discuss its potential implications in improving the proactive work behavior of teachers.

Proactive Leadership in the Context of School Administration

This section discusses proactive leadership as a future-oriented leadership approach situated within the context of school administration. Proactive leadership in school administration is the leadership orientation that focuses on anticipation, preparedness, and developmental action as opposed to responding later when problems have been experienced. According to this perspective, leadership not only entails sustaining the normal running of the school, but also detecting new challenges, equipping the school for change, and establishing the organizational conditions that will enable the school to keep improving. Proactive leadership in higher education has been associated with improving the educational environment by being proactive in administrative practice (Ben Mohamed, 2025). Likewise, ethnographic studies of school administration have demonstrated that proactive leadership is practiced by anticipatory planning, effective communication, collaborative decision-making, and integrating professional development into the daily practice of administration (Mosal & Base, 2025). These results indicate that proactive leadership is not merely a personal disposition to take action prematurely but an administrative disposition that is entrenched in organizational practice. Although proactive leadership shares a developmental orientation with transformational leadership, the two constructs are not conceptually identical. Transformational leadership primarily emphasizes vision, inspiration, and motivational influence, whereas proactive leadership places stronger emphasis on anticipation, preparedness, and early action before problems intensify. In this sense, proactive leadership is distinguished by its future-oriented and pre-emptive administrative logic.

This perspective is increasingly relevant as schools today operate under conditions of policy reform, technological advancement, and the increasing demands on the quality of education. In this case, school leaders are supposed to not only coordinate the work effectively, but also enhance the ability of the school to adapt. The studies on proactive school management reveal that leadership could have a positive influence on the technology readiness of teachers, which implies that proactive leadership is associated with institutional responsiveness and professional adjustment (Kadiyono & Wardhani, 2024). The wider learning literature also indicates the worth of proactive orientations in promoting self-directed engagement and readiness to change related to learning (Papi & Hiver, 2025).



These insights combined make proactive leadership a strategic and developmental strategy that can assist schools to adapt to changing professional and organizational needs.

The literature also indicates that proactive leadership is not only to be perceived as a personal characteristic of the principal, but rather as a context-forming influence in the school. Leadership determines the distribution of authority, promotion of initiative, and the teachers' perception of the importance of the work. Koçak and Tosun (2023) discovered that certain dimensions of empowering leadership had a positive correlation with the proactive work behavior of teachers, but work meaningfulness proved to be a more powerful predictor. In the same way, Pradesa et al. (2023) also found that both ethical work climate and perceived organizational support had a positive impact on proactive work behavior in teachers, but the effect of ethical work climate was more significant. Other studies on authentic leadership also suggest that leadership can promote innovative work behavior through proactive personality and engagement, highlighting the facilitating aspect of leadership in the development of agentic professional action (Bai et al., 2022). Combined, these results indicate that proactive leadership can be best understood as an administrative orientation that promotes meaningful, ethical, and supportive organizational conditions in which teachers are more likely to be proactive and help in improving the school in a sustainable way.

Figure 1 is the conceptual framework of this article based on this synthesis. It shows how proactive leadership in school administration can lead to the proactive work behavior of teachers indirectly by establishing favourable organizational conditions and, eventually, to sustainable school improvement.



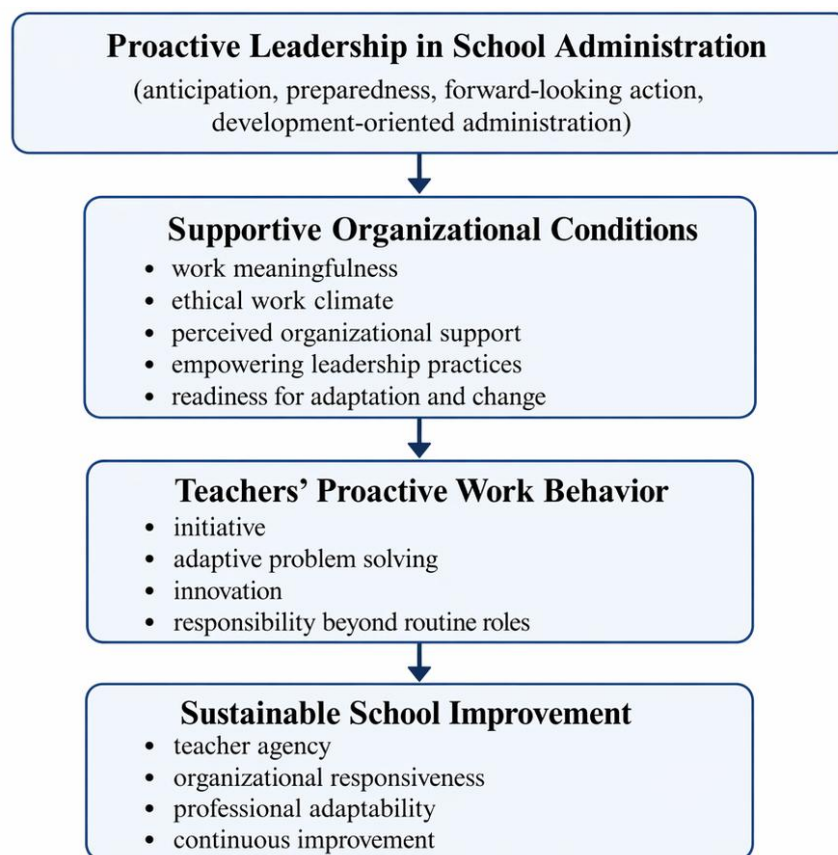


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of proactive leadership in school administration and teachers' proactive work behavior

Source: Developed by the author based on Ben Mohamed (2025), Kadiyono & Wardhani (2024), Koçak & Tosun (2023), and Pradesa et al. (2023)

The conceptualization of proactive leadership, as presented in Figure 1, is that this is the initial state of leadership that indirectly affects the improvement of the school by creating favourable organizational conditions. These conditions do not necessarily lead to the proactive work behavior of teachers, but increase the likelihood of teachers taking the initiative to change, adaptive problem solving, and working outside the normal role expectations. In this sense, the proactive work behavior of teachers is framed as a contextually mediated professional agency, and not an individual attribute. The framework thus emphasizes the fact that sustainable school improvement is not just a matter of leadership direction at the top, but also whether leadership is capable of creating meaningful, ethical, and supportive environments in which teacher initiative can be translated into continuous organizational development. In summary, proactive leadership in school administration should be understood as a future-oriented administrative orientation that emphasizes anticipation, preparedness, and the creation of enabling organizational conditions for school improvement.



Teachers' Proactive Work Behavior as a Contextually Enabled Form of Professional Agency

The proactive work behavior of teachers can be construed as a type of professional agency manifested in initiative, adaptive problem solving, innovation, and positive action outside of the regular role expectations. Such behavior is significant in school settings since teachers are not only supposed to carry out instructional roles, but also to respond to change, enhance practice, and be part of the larger school development. In this regard, the proactive work behavior of teachers can be considered a valuable organizational resource for school flexibility and efficiency (Koçak & Tosun, 2023; Pradesa et al., 2023). Although proactive work behavior and innovative work behavior are closely related, they are not identical. Proactive work behavior refers more broadly to self-initiated, future-oriented, and change-focused action, whereas innovative work behavior refers more specifically to the generation and implementation of new ideas. In this sense, innovative work behavior may be understood as one possible expression of proactive work behavior, but proactive work behavior also includes initiative-taking, adaptive problem solving, and responsibility beyond prescribed roles.

Notably, such a behavior cannot be regarded solely as an individual or dispositional trait. Despite the possible variability of teachers in their personal tendencies, the literature indicates that the proactive work behavior of teachers is highly influenced by the conditions in schools and facilitating professional relationships. An example is Koçak & Tosun (2023), who discovered that this behavior was positively correlated with certain aspects of empowering leadership and, more significantly, work meaningfulness. Their results also indicated that work meaningfulness was a strong predictor, but empowering leadership behaviours were not strong predictors in the regression model. This implies that teachers will tend to be proactive when they feel that their work is valuable, meaningful, and worth ameliorating. Educational psychology studies also indicate that proactive orientations correlate with greater engagement and are mediated by relational and efficacy-related variables, which supports the significance of social and contextual supports in the manifestation of proactive behavior (Chen et al., 2021; Hua et al., 2020).

The same trend is observed in the studies of ethical work climate and perceived organizational support. Pradesa et al. (2023) found that both variables had a positive impact on the proactive work behavior of teachers, and ethical work climate had the most significant effect. This result suggests that educators tend to be more proactive and take more initiative in the workplace where ethical clarity, collegial support, and organizational care are evident. Other studies, not necessarily in the school setting, however, point to a similar interpretation by indicating that proactive personality is linked with resilience, psychological well-being, and adaptability, especially when people are enabled by facilitating



psychological and social states (Eşkisü, 2021; Mercan & Öztemel, 2023). In this view, the proactive work behavior of teachers is not merely an individual extra-role tendency, but a contextually facilitated professional reaction to supportive school conditions.

This understanding is also in line with the studies on proactive educational support in general. Psychosocial support, coping-focused guidance, and advising models have been demonstrated as proactive mechanisms to enhance agency, preparedness, and adaptive response in higher education prior to crisis situations (Mogashana & Basitere, 2021; Ploysopon et al., 2023; Rothwell & Shields, 2021; Rust & Willey, 2024). Though these researches are centered on students and not on teachers, they support the general principle that active behavior is more probable when institutions are anticipative, supportive early, and establish systems that justify initiative. Combined, these studies indicate that the proactive work behavior of teachers can be most aptly described as a contextually mediated kind of professional agency that is nurtured by meaningful work, ethical climate, organizational support, and proactive leadership. In summary, teachers' proactive work behavior should be understood not simply as an individual tendency, but as a contextually enabled form of professional agency shaped by supportive organizational and leadership conditions.

Implications of Proactive Leadership for Sustainable School Improvement

The implications of proactive leadership for sustainable school improvement are significant since it shifts the school administration to long-term capacity building as opposed to short-term management of problems. Proactive leadership focuses on anticipation, preparation, and institutional responsiveness instead of responding to problems when they escalate. This orientation is particularly important in modern schools, where the enhancement of the school does not only rely on the implementation of the policies but also on the capacity of the school to evolve constantly in terms of pedagogical, organizational, and technological change (Ben Mohamed, 2025; Kadiyono & Wardhani, 2024). The above discussion indicates that proactive leadership is a factor in school improvement that does not just happen through administrative guidance, but also through the establishment of organizational, professional, and relational environments that maintain teacher agency and school responsiveness. In this regard, proactive leadership can be conceptualized as a process that connects leadership practice to teacher agency, organizational flexibility, and institutional growth. Figure 2 is based on this synthesis and demonstrates how proactive leadership can be a sustainable school improvement mechanism.





Figure 2. Proactive leadership as a mechanism for sustainable school improvement

Source: Developed by the author based on Ben Mohamed (2025), Kadiyono & Wardhani (2024), Koçak & Tosun (2023), and Pradesa et al. (2023)

The conceptualization of proactive leadership is presented in Figure 2 as the initial force which facilitates sustainable school improvement in a series of processes that are interrelated. It initially helps in the establishment of enabling school conditions such as support, ethical climate, meaningful work and readiness to adapt. These circumstances in turn enhance teacher professional agency through initiative, responsibility, innovation and adaptive problem solving. When this agency is maintained in the school organization, it leads to increased responsiveness of the organization and ongoing improvement. In this sense, sustainable school improvement is not the direct product of leadership, but the result of a leadership process that creates the environment within which teachers operate and professionally grow.

A significant implication of proactive leadership is that it helps to create professional conditions that maintain teacher agency in the long run. According to the literature, the more teachers consider their work meaningful and the school climate encourages initiative, responsibility, and adaptive action, the more proactive work behavior they are likely to exhibit (Koçak & Tosun, 2023; Pradesa et al., 2023). Sustainable school improvement, then, cannot be seen in the light of structural reform or administrative efficiency only. It is also based on the ability of leadership to establish organizational



conditions where teachers are willing and able to take the first step to improve, address the arising issues, and go beyond the minimum role requirements. In this regard, proactive leadership does not only help in improving performance in the current moment, but also the long-term growth of the professional capacity to improve in the future.

The second implication is related to school adaptability. The studies of proactive school management indicate that leadership can enhance the willingness of teachers to work with technological and professional change, which is becoming more and more essential in digitally mediated learning settings (Kadiyono & Wardhani, 2024). Ethnographic data also show that proactive school leaders employ communication, systematization, delegation, and professional learning structures to ensure organizational responsiveness in complex situations (Mosal & Base, 2025). In this regard, proactive leadership contributes to school improvement not merely by establishing direction, but also facilitating learning in the organization and professional adaptation. This renders proactive leadership particularly applicable to schools that aim to be responsive in circumstances of uncertainty and swift change.

The third implication is in the ethical and relational aspects of school improvement. Pradesa et al. (2023) demonstrated that the effect of ethical work climate on proactive work behavior of teachers was even more significant than perceived organizational support. This observation implies that sustainable school improvement is not just a matter of strategic planning, but also the moral and relational quality of the school environment. With trust, fairness, support, and shared professional purpose, the improvement is more likely to be maintained when leadership allows the teachers to feel that school is not just a workplace, but a professional community that validates initiative and shared responsibility. This argument is aligned with the general results that proactive orientations can be more sustainable when institutions establish meaningful and supportive environments and do not rely solely on individual effort (Bai et al., 2022; Eşkisü, 2021).

In practical terms, these findings suggest that schools can promote teachers' proactive work behavior by developing meaningful work environments, strengthening ethical and supportive school climates, encouraging shared responsibility, and providing professional development opportunities that foster initiative, adaptive problem solving, and readiness for change. Collectively, these studies indicate that proactive leadership is an important conceptual pillar for sustainable school improvement. Its usefulness is not just in enabling schools to better respond to change, but also in enhancing the organizational, professional, and relational environments within which teacher initiative can be converted into continuous school improvement. Proactive leadership in this sense provides a beneficial intermediary between leadership theory, teacher agency, and long-term capacity of schools to improve. In summary,



proactive leadership contributes to sustainable school improvement by strengthening the conditions through which teacher agency, adaptability, and continuous improvement can be sustained.

Knowledge Contribution

This article contributes to educational administration scholarship in three main ways. First, it clarifies proactive leadership as more than an individual leadership trait by positioning it as a context-shaping and future-oriented administrative orientation rooted in anticipation, preparedness, and enabling organizational conditions (Ben Mohamed, 2025; Mosal & Base, 2025). Second, it conceptualizes teachers' proactive work behavior not simply as a personal disposition, but as a contextually enabled form of professional agency shaped by work meaningfulness, ethical climate, organizational support, and leadership conditions (Koçak & Tosun, 2023; Pradesa et al., 2023). Third, it proposes a clearer conceptual link between proactive leadership, enabling school conditions, teacher professional agency, and sustainable school improvement, thereby extending the discussion of leadership beyond direct managerial influence to its indirect role in fostering teacher initiative and adaptive action (Kadiyono & Wardhani, 2024; Koçak & Tosun, 2023). Based on the synthesis presented in this article, Figure 3 summarizes the main knowledge contribution of the study by highlighting its key conceptual advances and practical implications.

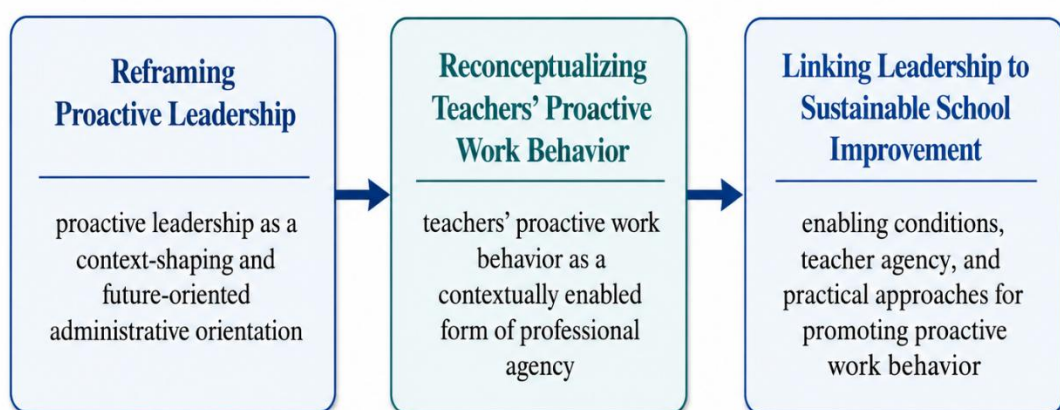


Figure 3. Knowledge contribution of the article

Source: Developed by the author based on the synthesis presented in this article.



As shown in Figure 3, this article contributes to the literature by clarifying the meaning of proactive leadership, reconceptualizing teachers' proactive work behavior within an organizational context, and proposing practical directions for sustainable school improvement. In practical terms, the article suggests several approaches for promoting teachers' proactive work behavior in schools. These include developing meaningful work environments, strengthening ethical and supportive school climates, encouraging shared responsibility, and providing professional development opportunities that foster initiative, adaptive problem solving, and readiness for change. In this sense, the article offers both a conceptual contribution to educational administration literature and practical directions for school leaders seeking to strengthen teacher agency and sustainable school improvement. In summary, this article contributes to educational administration scholarship by reframing proactive leadership as a context-shaping administrative orientation, positioning teachers' proactive work behavior as a contextually enabled form of professional agency, and proposing practical directions for strengthening teacher agency and sustainable school improvement.

Conclusion

Proactive leadership offers a worthy perspective through which school leadership can be re-evaluated in the modern educational setting. With the growing uncertainty, technological change, and demands on the quality of education, leadership can no longer be perceived in reactive or routine managerial terms. The literature review conducted in this article indicates that proactive leadership is important in the sense that it focuses on anticipation, preparation, and developmental action, which in turn helps schools to be more responsive to change in a constructive and sustainable manner. The discussion further suggests that the proactive work behavior of teachers cannot be considered as a personal disposition. Instead, it is born out of organizational and professional circumstances that are influenced by leadership. The willingness of teachers to take initiative, adaptive problem solving, and contribution beyond the normal expectations seem to be reinforced by supportive school environments, work meaningfulness, ethical climate, and organizational support. Proactive leadership is important not merely because leaders take action beforehand, but because they create the circumstances in which teacher agency can grow and be maintained. Viewed from this perspective, proactive leadership in school administration can be interpreted as a context-shaping and future-oriented administrative orientation that bridges the gap between leadership practice and teacher proactivity and long-term school change. It is valuable in that it assists schools to be more adaptive, professionally supportive, and improvement-oriented institutions. In practical terms, promoting teachers' proactive work behavior



may involve developing meaningful work environments, strengthening ethical and supportive school climates, encouraging shared responsibility, and providing professional development opportunities that foster initiative, adaptive problem solving, and readiness for change. On this basis, proactive leadership provides a practical conceptual framework for educational administration scholarship and a practical way to enhance teacher agency and facilitate long-term school growth.

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