



ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome

ISSN: 2351-0617 (print), ISSN: 2408-2058 (electronic)

A Model for Enhancing Teacher Leadership Skills at Private Preschool in Guan Du District, Kunming, China

Yang Heng, Nathara Mhunpiew

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome Vol 14(1) pp. 336-357

<https://assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/odijournal>

Published by the
Organization Development Institute
Graduate School of Business and Advanced Technology Management
Assumption University Thailand

ABAC ODI JOURNAL Vision. Action. Outcome
is indexed by the Thai Citation Index and ASEAN Citation Index

A Model for Enhancing Teacher Leadership Skills at Private Preschool in Guan Du District, Kunming, China

Zhenyu Zhang¹, Nathara Mhunpiew²

¹Corresponding Author, Ph.D. Candidate, Educational Administration and Leadership
Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.

Email: yangheng0729@163.com

²Lecturer, Graduate School of Human Sciences, Assumption University, Thailand.

Email: drnathera@gmail.com

Received: 10 November 2025. Revised: 06 December 2025. Accepted: 20 January 2026

Abstract

This study aimed to construct and validate a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills in private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China. Guided by Katz's three-skill theory and 21st-century skills (National Education Association, 2010), a systematic review of 36 studies was conducted following PRISMA protocols, identifying six core domains: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were adopted. On the quantitative side, survey data from 384 preschool teachers were analyzed using means, standard deviations, and the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) to identify areas requiring enhancement. Findings indicated that communication (PNI_{modified} = 0.045) and problem-solving (PNI_{modified} = 0.036) showed the largest gaps between desired and current practices, followed by critical thinking (PNI_{modified} = 0.026) and collaboration (PNI_{modified} = 0.023). In contrast, innovation (PNI_{modified} = 0.019) and conflict management (PNI_{modified} = 0.019) showed smaller gaps, reflecting relative strengths. On the qualitative side, interviews with nine stakeholders—including two investors, two principals, three teachers, and two parents—highlighted the importance of contextualization and cultural responsiveness in leadership practice. Based on these findings, a Continuing Professional Development (CPD)-anchored concentric model was developed, placing the six leadership skills at its center, operationalized through job-embedded professional routines such as the Parent Partnership Lab, Co-Teaching Sprint, Solution Lab Challenge, Reflect & Reframe Workshop, Local Culture Innovation Studio, and Peace Talks Simulation. Implementation is supported by five CPD principles—continuity, contextualization, agency and identity, professional learning

communities, and systemic support—while the outer layer emphasizes policy support, stakeholder engagement, and local cultural integration to create a comprehensive support system. Validation by nine experts confirmed the model’s coherence, feasibility, and contextual relevance. Overall, the study concludes that targeted support across all six skill domains, combined with systematic reinforcement, provides an effective pathway to enhance preschool quality and strengthen family-school trust.

Keywords: Teacher Leadership Skills; Private Preschools; Preschool Teachers

Introduction

Teacher leadership has increasingly been recognized as a critical driver of educational improvement, fostering collaboration, innovation, and sustained professional growth among teachers. Globally, researchers highlight that empowering teachers to lead beyond their classrooms enhances collective efficacy and student learning outcomes (Wenner & Campbell, 2017). In early childhood education, teacher leadership—often expressed through mentoring, peer collaboration, and curriculum innovation—serves as a key mechanism for improving instructional quality and organizational learning (Heikka & Hujala, 2013). In China, recent reforms emphasize teacher professionalism and leadership capacity as essential components of high-quality preschool education (MOE, 2010; Wang & Ho, 2020).

Despite these initiatives, many private preschools in Kunming’s Guan Du District still face challenges in cultivating effective teacher leadership. Hierarchical structures, limited institutional autonomy, and inadequate professional development opportunities restrict teachers from exercising leadership roles (Ho et al., 2019). Recent Chinese studies show that principal leadership style and organizational culture shape preschool teachers’ creative teaching and leadership enactment, reinforcing the need for school-level enabling conditions (Wang & Zhang, 2024; Xu et al., 2024). Previous studies reveal that authentic and distributed leadership among preschool teachers in Kunming remains underdeveloped, highlighting the need for more structured, context-based models for leadership enhancement (Yue et al., 2021).

This study aims to develop and validate a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills among private preschool teachers in Guan Du District, Kunming, China. The model focuses on six core competencies—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management—derived from international and Chinese research.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the teacher leadership skills in the 21st century required for private preschool.
2. To identify the needs for enhancing teacher leadership skills in the 21st century at private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.
3. To develop a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills in the 21st century at private preschool in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.
4. To validate the model for enhancing teacher leadership skills at private preschool teachers in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on the development of teacher leadership skills in early childhood education (ECE), with a specific focus on private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming. It integrates three complementary strands—Katz’s Three-Skill Approach, the 21st-century skills framework, and Transformational Leadership—to delineate the competencies that underpin teacher leadership in preschool contexts. Building on these lenses, continuing professional development (CPD) theory is used to explain how such competencies are cultivated and sustained. The chapter then situates teacher leadership within Kunming’s local landscape and reports the PRISMA-guided evidence base that informed the study’s domains, instrument, and model. Taken together, the review provides the conceptual and contextual foundation for constructing a localized model to enhance teacher leadership, while clarifying boundary conditions (e.g., resource constraints, workload, and policy compliance) that shape enactment in private ECE markets.

Teacher Leadership Skill

Katz’s (1955) Three-Skill Approach explains leadership effectiveness as an integration of technical, human, and conceptual skills. In preschool settings, technical skill translates into age-appropriate pedagogy, purposeful play, classroom management, formative assessment, and curriculum design. Human skill covers communication with colleagues and families, empathy, facilitation, conflict handling, and team coordination. Conceptual skill includes systems thinking, anticipatory problem solving, and the capacity to align classroom routines with organizational goals. For private preschools in Guan Du, these three skill dimensions provide a practical scaffold for professional learning: teachers must master classroom craft, work

productively with adults, and think strategically about program quality. Importantly, these skills operate interdependently; for example, a teacher's technical repertoire gains impact only when human skills build trust within teams and conceptual skills link daily practice to schoolwide aims and parent expectations.

The 21st-century skills framework elaborates four cross-cutting competencies—critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (NEA, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). In this study, the “4Cs” map directly onto six operational domains. Communication and collaboration remain stand-alone domains; critical thinking anchors analytic components of problem solving; and creativity underpins innovation. Conflict management emerges at the intersection of human skill and collaboration, reflecting the need to navigate disagreement constructively in diverse school communities. The combined Katz-NEA perspective thus translates broad leadership ideals into specific, observable practices suitable for preschool teams. In operational terms, the study treats these domains as coachable behaviors that can be observed, rehearsed, and evidenced through artifacts (e.g., co-planning notes, parent-communication scripts, and reflective journals).

Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978) complements these skill frameworks by describing the motivational processes that enable growth: articulating a shared purpose, modeling ethical practice, stimulating professional inquiry, and offering individualized support. In preschools, such processes are visible when teacher leaders mentor novices, facilitate lesson study, experiment with new learning centers, or prototype family-engagement routines. International and Chinese reviews converge on teacher leadership as influence without authority exercised through expertise and trust, often organized as distributed or pedagogical leadership (Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Wenner & Campbell, 2017). This orientation is especially salient in private settings where formal role titles may be fluid and leadership relies on credibility, shared norms, and evidence of impact rather than positional power.

Empirical ECE studies associate teacher leadership with stronger professional communities, greater instructional coherence, and—in some systems—gains in learner outcomes (Fonsén et al., 2023). Effects are consistently mediated by context—policy steering, market pressures, workforce stability, and parental expectations—underscoring the need for localized models that translate broad competencies into daily, job-embedded routines. This insight motivates the present study's emphasis on concrete practices (e.g., co-teaching sprints, solution-lab challenges, and parent-partnership labs) that express the six domains in the flow of work. In addition, the review highlights the role of data-informed reflection—brief cycles of trying, observing, and adjusting—as a mechanism that helps teams convert collaboration into measurable change.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Theory

CPD provides a process model for developing teacher leadership. Building on Day and Sachs (2004), five principles guide this study. First, continuity: learning is ongoing and cyclic, linking short practice sprints to longer-term developmental goals. Second, contextualization: professional learning is tailored to local culture, family expectations, and school constraints rather than imported wholesale. Third, agency and identity: teachers act as co-designers who set goals, self-assess growth, and craft leadership identities. Fourth, collaboration and professional learning communities (PLCs) foster improvement through social means, occurring via shared planning, rehearsal, and feedback. Fifth, systemic support, including time, mentoring roles, and supervisory routines, aligns with PD aims. These principles are operationalized through short, repeating cycles that reduce time costs while increasing the probability of transfer to classrooms.

These principles carry practical implications for a teacher-leadership model in private preschools. Needs should be prioritized with transparent criteria; in this study, the Modified Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) ranks gaps between desired and current practice to target scarce PD time. Learning activities should be job-embedded and time-efficient so development occurs within the workday. Evidence of progress should be collected through brief reflections, peer-observation notes, and pre-post domain scales. Finally, CPD should connect individual growth to organizational routines, so gains in communication, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management accumulate into a stronger team culture and curriculum coherence. To support sustainability, the model also specifies supervision and feedback structures, aligning incentives and appraisal with learning goals and clarifying mentor and facilitator roles.

Context of the Study

Kunming's ECE system has expanded under national reforms that emphasize teacher professionalism, curriculum quality, and equitable access (MOE, 2010). Within this system, private providers play a substantial role in urban districts such as Guan Du, where parental demand and competition shape organizational behavior. Local analyses report persistent challenges: uneven professional preparation, variable access to training, staffing turnover, and pressure to satisfy diverse parental expectations. These conditions make teacher leadership—particularly in communication, collaboration, and problem solving—both necessary and difficult to enact. They also create variation across centers by fee level, program emphasis, and staffing stability, increasing the need for a development model that is both rigorous and feasible for busy teachers.

Evidence specific to Kunming underscores the need for contextualized leadership development. A study of 157 teachers across three private kindergartens in Kunming found

relatively low levels of authentic leadership, with personality traits and school climate predicting variation (Yue et al., 2021). Related research highlights the enabling role of principal leadership, supportive culture, and PLC structures in activating teacher leadership (Zhang et al., 2022). Together, these findings suggest that capacity building must target both individual competencies and organizational conditions. In Guan Du's marketized environment, models must also address parent-school communication and trust, which are essential for enrollment stability and program reputation.

To ground the present model in evidence, a PRISMA-guided review was conducted. Across CNKI, ERIC, and Google Scholar, 973 records were identified; after removing 328 duplicates, 645 titles and abstracts were screened. Of these, 539 were excluded due to language, scope, or population mismatch, leaving 106 full texts for eligibility review. Thirty-six studies met the inclusion criteria and were synthesized to define sub-skills (e.g., active listening, shared planning, root-cause analysis, idea generation, negotiation, and mediation). These sub-skills were clustered into six teacher-leadership domains—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management—that informed instrument design, needs analysis, and the CPD-anchored model. Intercoder agreement checks, a structured codebook, and constant-comparison techniques were used to enhance the reliability and transparency of the synthesis.

In conclusion, the literature converges on three propositions that guide this study. First, effective teacher leadership in ECE requires an integrated skill set—technical, human, and conceptual—expressed through the 4Cs and supported by transformational processes. Second, durable growth in these skills depends on CPD that is continuous, contextualized, agentic, collaborative, and system supported. Third, because enactment is highly sensitive to local conditions, especially in competitive urban markets such as Guan Du, models must be localized and operationalized as job-embedded routines that fit the realities of private preschool teams. These propositions shaped the domain structure, the design of routines, and the enabling conditions specified in the model that follows.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative strategies to develop and validate a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills in private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China. The combination of these approaches ensured methodological rigor and a holistic understanding of the research problem. The design was explicitly triangulated: qualitative evidence established constructs and contextual plausibility, while quantitative data provided breadth, precision, and prioritization. Integration occurred at

multiple points—during instrument construction, in joint interpretation of findings, and in the incorporation of empirical priorities into a staged implementation plan—thereby strengthening internal coherence and practical utility for local schools.

The qualitative component addressed Research Objectives 1, 3, and 4. For Objective 1, a descriptive literature review guided by the PRISMA framework synthesized theoretical and empirical research on teacher leadership skills and identified the core domains relevant to private preschool education. For Objective 3, a model-development process translated the identified domains into a contextually appropriate framework aligned with the principles of continuing professional development, specifying domain-to-routine linkages and short learning cycles. For Objective 4, expert validation involved consulting with nine stakeholders—including investors, principals, teachers, and parents—to evaluate the model’s clarity, feasibility, and contextual fit. The interviews were transcribed, coded through content analysis, and verified through expert cross-checking to strengthen credibility.

The quantitative phase, corresponding to Research Objective 2, utilized a structured questionnaire to assess teachers’ perceptions of both desired and current practices in six leadership domains: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management. The instrument employed a five-point Likert format with paired ratings and underwent content validity review and pilot reliability testing before field use. The data were analyzed using the Modified Priority Needs Index, adapted from prior needs-assessment research, to determine developmental priorities by quantifying gaps between ideal and actual practices. Descriptive statistics supported interpretation, and domain- and item-level rankings informed the sequencing of activities. This ensured that the proposed model was empirically grounded, theoretically informed, and contextually responsive, providing a foundation for sustainable professional development and educational improvement in private preschools in Guan Du District.

Conceptual Framework

This research aims to develop a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills among private preschool teachers in Guan Du District, Kunming, China. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study, detailing the three major theories that support this research. A systematic review was employed to explore the desired teacher leadership skills specific to the context of private preschool education in the Guan Du District.

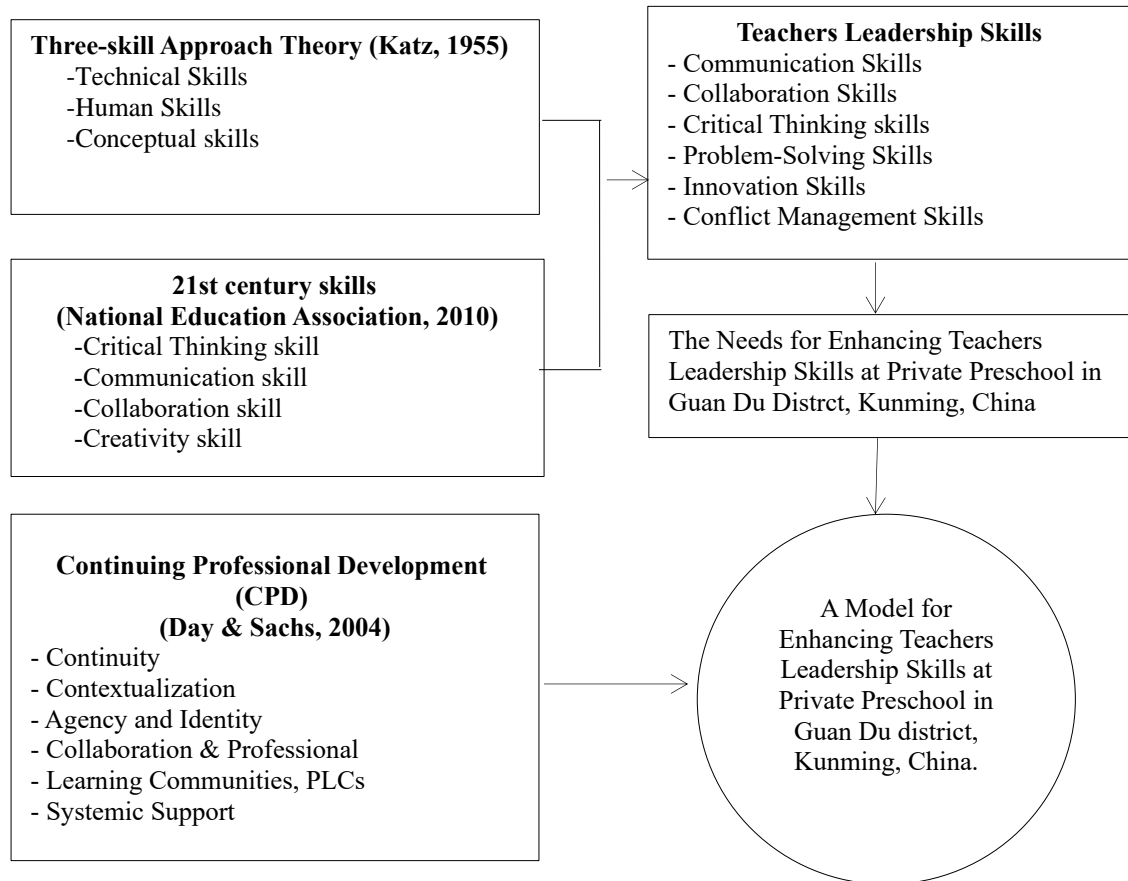
The study undertook a comprehensive collection and synthesis of relevant literature to identify and categorize essential teacher leadership skills. Key theoretical foundations include the Three-Skill Approach (Katz, 1955) and 21st Century Skills (National Education Association, 2010). Additional literature was sourced from both international and Chinese academic databases to ensure contextual and theoretical relevance. Guided by Katz’s three-skill theory and 21st-century skills (National Education Association, 2010), a systematic review of 36 studies was conducted following PRISMA protocols, identifying six core domains:

communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management.

Drawing on a PRISMA-guided review and expert input, this study identified six core domains of teacher leadership for private preschools in Guan Du District—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management—and used them as the conceptual basis for measurement and model design. A districtwide survey of 384 teachers indicated high levels of both desired and current practices across all domains. The Modified Priority Needs Index prioritized development needs by revealing the largest gaps in communication and problem solving, moderate gaps in critical thinking and collaboration, and smaller gaps in innovation and conflict management. Integrating quantitative evidence with qualitative insights from nine local stakeholders, the study developed and validated a continuing professional development anchored model that centers the six domains, translates each into job embedded professional routines that can be rehearsed and observed in daily work, and embeds enabling conditions of continuity, contextualization, agency, and identity, professional learning communities, and systemic support. Expert validation refined terminology, sequencing, time allocation, supervision, and stakeholder roles, strengthening feasibility and coherence. Overall, the model offers a clear, actionable, and context-responsive pathway to enhance teacher leadership in private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming. It provides a practical basis for staged implementation aligned with local policy expectations to advance educational quality in a sustained manner.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework of this Study



Sampling Procedure

For Research Objective 1, the study conducted a systematic literature review to identify factors of teacher leadership skills in the context of private preschools in Guan du District, Kunming, China. A comprehensive descriptive review was undertaken using CNKI, ERIC, and Google Scholar (in both English and Chinese), supplemented by Chinese sources such as Educational Observation, Preschool Education Research, and mainland university dissertations to ensure contextual relevance. The search yielded 973 records; after removing 328 duplicates and applying the PRISMA screening process, 36 studies were retained for synthesis, providing a high-quality, locally relevant evidence base to specify six leadership domains: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management. For Research Objective 2, the teacher population was drawn from 10 private

preschools in Guan Du District, selected via purposive sampling to reflect diversity in educational philosophy, size, and geographic distribution. According to local education bureau statistics, the total population comprised 384 full-time teachers. Following Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this population size was adequate for quantitative analysis. A structured questionnaire was distributed via Wenjuanxing; responses were screened and verified by school principals, and 384 completed questionnaires were included in the analysis. For Research Objective 3, the same sample was used to determine priority needs for enhancing teacher leadership skills through PNI_{modified} analysis. This involved comparing desired and current practice levels across the six domains to prioritize professional-development focus areas for Guan Du's private preschools.

Research Instruments

To collect the quantitative data, the researcher developed a Teacher Leadership Skills Questionnaire tailored for private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming. The instrument comprised three sections: Section I captured basic demographics (gender, educational background, and years of teaching in private ECE); Section II measured teachers' desired and current practices across six leadership domains—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management—using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) presented in a paired left-right format; Section III included exploratory items grounded in Transformational Leadership to inform model design and expert discussion (items in this section were not used in the PNI_{modified} ranking).

Content validity was examined via the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC) with a five-expert panel from the local private ECE sector. All item groups met the $IOC \geq .80$ criterion (many at 1.00), indicating acceptable alignment; minor wording refinements were made where appropriate, and no items were removed. A pilot test ($n = 30$) conducted with preschool teachers from a private preschool in Guandu District who were not part of the main sample, established internal consistency (Cronbach's α): communication .774; collaboration .910; critical thinking .866; problem-solving .887; innovation .843; conflict management .939; transformational leadership .976. A subsequent reliability analysis on the main sample confirmed excellent internal consistency across the six leadership domains, with specific coefficients as follows: communication .902; collaboration .915; critical thinking .926; problem-solving .929; innovation .919; conflict management .932.

Quantitative analyses were conducted in SPSS (frequency, mean, standard deviation). To prioritize development needs, the study employed the Modified Priority Needs Index

(PNI_{modified}), computed as $(I - D) / D$, where I and D denote mean scores for desired and current practices, respectively. For model validation, semi-structured expert interviews ($n = 9$) were administered; transcripts underwent content analysis to organize feedback into themes aligned with the six domains and the CPD principles, and revisions were synthesized into the final validated model.

Results and Discussion

Research Objective 1: To explore the teacher leadership skills required for private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

Research Objective 1 employed a systematic descriptive literature review (PRISMA) to specify teacher-leadership skill factors relevant to private preschool settings. After abstract screening and full-text analysis, 36 studies were retained from an initial pool of 973 records (with 328 duplicates removed). From these 36 sources, the researcher coded 28 sub-keywords and then grouped and merged conceptually similar items into six main skill domains that frame this study: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management. Illustratively, highly recurrent sub-keywords included reflective thinking, building trust, mutual support, and active listening, while items such as predicting outcomes appeared less frequently. Table 1 integrates and defines these six domains and their representative sub-keywords, providing the conceptual basis for instrument design, needs assessment (PNI_{modified}), and subsequent model development .

To strengthen methodological rigor and local relevance, the search strategy covered English- and Chinese-language sources (2015-2025) in major databases such as CNKI, ERIC, and Google Scholar, using Boolean operators to combine constructs for teacher leadership, early childhood education, and private preschools. Inclusion criteria required clear operationalization of teacher leadership behaviors or competencies in early childhood contexts, empirical or theory-building contributions, and methodological transparency. Exclusion criteria screened out opinion pieces and studies without preschool relevance. Quality appraisal notes were recorded for design, sampling, and measurement clarity. A structured codebook was developed to ensure consistency, as sub-keywords were compared and clustered through constant-comparison techniques. The resulting synthesis was cross-walked with foundational frameworks to ensure conceptual coverage and transferability. Human and conceptual emphases in Katz's three-skill approach and the NEA's 21st-century competencies support the six-domain structure. Alignment with China's early childhood policy discourse further anchors the domains in Guan Du's private preschool context.

Table 1*The Teacher Leadership Skills*

Teacher Leadership Skills	Sub-keywords	Definition
Communication Skills	Active Listening (17) Purposeful Messaging (7) Digital Communication (9) Cross-Cultural Communication (9) Written Expression (8)	The ability to effectively express, listen, and adapt messages across verbal, nonverbal, digital, and cross-cultural contexts to support collaboration and engagement.
Collaboration Skills	Flexibility (9) Shared Responsibility (8) Valuing Contributions (11) Mutual Support (18) Mutual Respect (12)	The capacity to work cooperatively with peers, families, and stakeholders by building trust, sharing responsibility, and fostering collective decision-making.
Critical Thinking skills	Systems Thinking (7) Evaluating Evidence (6) Considering Alternative Views (11) Synthesizing Information (8) Reflective Thinking (21)	The ability to analyze problems, reflect on practice, evaluate evidence, and consider alternative perspectives to guide informed and ethical educational decisions.
Problem-Solving Skills	Problem Analysis (11) Cause Analysis (6) Predicting Outcomes (1) Evaluating Solutions (12)	The skill of identifying root issues, planning and implementing data-driven solutions, and adapting strategies to overcome instructional and organizational challenges.
Innovation Skills	Idea Generation Techniques (12) Originality (9) Idea Improvement (9) Learning from Failure (11) Implementing Innovation (12)	The creative capacity to generate, test, and implement new ideas and practices that enhance teaching, learning, and school development in evolving contexts.
Conflict Management Skills	Negotiation and Mediation (12) Encouraging Compromise (12) Constructive Dialogue (15) Encouraging Dissenting Views (14) Building Trust (20)	The interpersonal ability to mediate disagreements, facilitate constructive dialogue, and build consensus among diverse groups in a respectful learning community.

Research Objective 2: To identify the needs for enhancing Teachers’ Leadership Skills at private schools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

The researcher obtained 384 valid questionnaires from full-time teachers across ten private preschools in Guan Du District. The instrument captured teachers’ desired and current practices for six leadership domains (communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, conflict management) using a five-point Likert format. Demographic variables included gender, educational background, and years of teaching experience in private early-childhood institutions; frequencies and percentages are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Summary of Frequency for Demographic Information (n=384)

Items	Categories	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	66	17.19%
	Female	318	82.81%
Educational Background	Bachelor’s Degree	352	91.67%
	Master’s Degree	11	2.86%
	Doctor’s Degree	6	1.56%
	Others	15	3.91%
Teaching Experiences at Private Pre-Schools	0-5 Years	291	75.78%
	6-10 Years	53	13.80%
	11-15 Years	24	6.25%
	16-20 Years	16	4.17%

A total of 384 valid teacher questionnaires were used to calculate the desired and current practices for teacher leadership skills. Table 3 presents the Mean and Standard Deviation for the desired and current practices across the six domains in Section II of the questionnaire.

Table 3

Summary of the Results of Desired and Current Practices for Teachers’ Leadership Skills (n=384)

Question	Desired			Current		
	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
1. Communication Skills	4.36	0.678	High	4.21	0.700	High
2. Collaboration Skills	4.42	0.617	High	4.32	0.642	High
3. Critical Thinking skills	4.4	0.636	High	4.29	0.681	High

Question	Desired			Current		
	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation	\bar{x}	SD	Interpretation
4. Problem-Solving Skills	4.37	0.643	High	4.22	0.708	High
5. Innovation Skills	4.35	0.654	High	4.27	0.682	High
6. Conflict Management Skills	4.39	0.629	High	4.33	0.674	High
Overall	4.38	0.643	High	4.27	0.681	High

Table 3 summarizes the results for desired and current practices of teachers' leadership skills. In the desired category, Collaboration shows the highest mean ($\bar{x} = 4.42$, $SD = 0.617$), followed by Critical Thinking ($\bar{x} = 4.40$, $SD = 0.636$), Conflict Management ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.629$), Problem-Solving ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.643$), Communication ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.678$), and Innovation ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.654$). The overall desired mean is 4.38 ($SD = 0.643$). For current practice, Conflict Management remains highest ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.674$), followed by Collaboration ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.642$), Critical Thinking ($M = 4.29$, $SD = 0.681$), Innovation ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.682$), Problem-Solving ($M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.708$), and Communication ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.700$). The overall current mean is 4.27 ($SD = 0.681$). All domain means fall within the High interpretive band.

Table 4

The Priority Needs Index (PNI_{modified}) of Desired and Current Practices for Teachers' Leadership Skills (n=384)

Item Description	Desired (I)	Current (D)	PNI _{modified}	Ranking
			(I-D)/D	
	\bar{x}	\bar{x}		
Communication Skills	4.39	4.2	0.045	1
Problem-Solving Skills	4.37	4.22	0.036	2
Critical Thinking skills	4.4	4.29	0.026	3
Collaboration Skills	4.42	4.32	0.023	4
Innovation Skills	4.35	4.27	0.019	5
Conflict Management Skills	4.39	4.33	0.019	5
Overall	4.39	4.27	0.028	

Table 4 presents the PNI_{modified} of desired and current practices across the six teacher leadership skill categories. Among all categories, Communication has the highest PNI_{modified} at 0.045, indicating the most significant overall need. The second highest is Problem-Solving with a PNI_{modified} of 0.036, followed by Critical Thinking at 0.026. Collaboration shows a PNI_{modified} of 0.023, while both Innovation and Conflict Management register the lowest values of 0.019, suggesting that these two areas present the smallest gaps and are relative strengths. The overall average PNI_{modified} across all six categories is 0.028, reflecting moderate but meaningful development needs in teacher leadership skills.

Research Objective 3: To develop a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills at private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

To inform model development, the researcher conducted semi structured interviews with nine stakeholders from private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, including two investors, two principals, three teachers, and two parents. Each participant had at least five years of experience in private early childhood education. Four guiding questions examined core leadership skills and their rationales, priority domains for improvement, illustrative outcomes attributable to teacher leadership, and perceived barriers and supports. Interviews were conducted via WeChat, lasting fifteen to twenty minutes, and were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using content analysis. Coding proceeded deductively by the six leadership domains of communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management, and inductively to capture emergent themes. The interview protocol and thematic results are presented in Table 5, and the insights were used to refine terminology, sequencing, and feasibility parameters of the CPD anchored model.

Table 5

Summary of Interview R-Results (n=9)

Question	Keywords	Result
Q1: What do you believe are the most essential teacher leadership skills that private preschool teachers in Guan Du District should develop? Why are these skills necessary for effective teaching and school development?	Communication, Problem-Solving, Collaboration, Innovation, Reflective Thinking, Critical Thinking	Stakeholders emphasized the importance of effective communication and problem-solving in building parental trust and ensuring smooth operations. Collaboration and reflective thinking were seen as essential for workload sharing and quality improvement. Innovation was highlighted for its uniqueness in the curriculum, while critical thinking supported curriculum alignment with primary school expectations.
Q2: Based on your experience, which of the following six leadership skills—	Innovation, Critical Thinking, Conflict Management, Collaboration	The most needed improvements are innovation and critical thinking, as

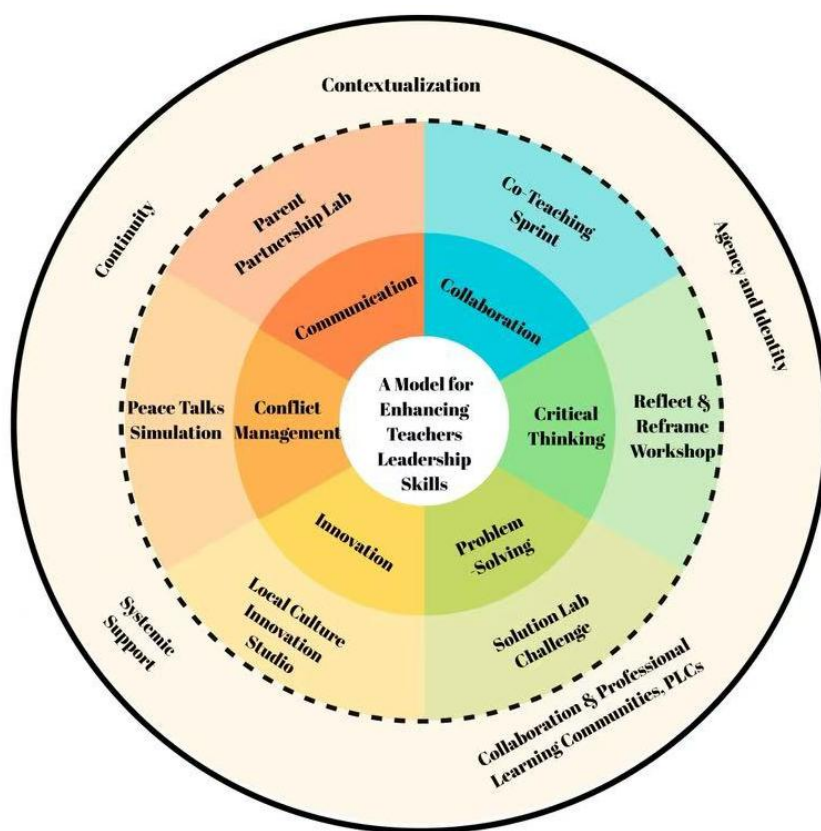
Question	Keywords	Result
communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, and conflict management—do you think local preschool teachers need to improve most? Please explain your reasons.		teachers often follow rigid lesson plans and lack creativity. Conflict management is also weak, with disputes frequently avoided. Collaboration challenges include resistance to sharing resources.
Q3: Can you share specific examples where strong teacher leadership skills have contributed to positive changes or outcomes in your preschool (or your child’s learning experience)?	Communication, Collaboration, Problem-Solving, Innovation, Reflective Thinking	Strong teacher leadership resulted in positive outcomes, including increased enrollment, reduced conflicts, higher parental satisfaction, and improved student adaptation. Examples include innovative curriculum projects, toy exchange activities, and bilingual integration, which raise engagement levels.
Q4: What challenges do you think teachers face in developing these leadership skills, and what support or resources would be most helpful to overcome these challenges?	Training, Time Management, Mentoring, Retention, Parental Engagement, Support	Significant challenges include a lack of time, high training costs, irrelevant or overly theoretical training, and high turnover. Suggested supports include micro-learning, mentoring, contextualized training, workload reduction, and stronger parental engagement.

Using qualitative and quantitative analyses, the researcher constructed a draft model for enhancing teacher leadership skills at private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China. Based on the six identified domains, PNI_{modified} prioritization indicated that communication and problem solving exhibited the largest gaps between desired and current practice and therefore require targeted improvement and development. The remaining domains—critical thinking, collaboration, innovation, and conflict management—scored slightly closer to the overall mean but were retained because they constitute essential competencies for teacher leadership in private preschool settings. Consistent with the study’s conceptual framework, the draft model integrates continuing professional development principles by translating domains into job-

embedded routines and depicting the interactions and mutual influences among skills and enabling conditions (continuity, contextualization, agency and identity, professional learning communities, and systemic support). Figure 3 presents the draft model for enhancing teacher leadership skills at private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

Figure 2

Draft of Model for Enhancing Teacher Leadership Skills at Private Preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China



Research Objective 4: To validate a model for enhancing teacher leadership skills at private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming, China.

After drafting the model, the researcher conducted a structured validation with nine local experts representing investors, principals, teachers, and parents, each with substantial

experience in private early childhood education in Guan Du District. Experts were purposively selected to capture variation in organizational role and years of service, and were provided with a briefing packet describing the model's context, its evidence base and data sources, the process and implementation logic, and the conceptual diagram. Reviews were completed through face-to-face meetings and online sessions using a Model Validation Evaluation Form that combined closed-ended ratings for relevance, clarity, feasibility, and contextual fit with open-ended comments. Sessions were audio recorded with consent, and notes were compiled into an audit trail. Qualitative feedback was analyzed through content analysis, and quantitative ratings were summarized to flag areas that required refinement. Decision rules guided revision priority, including convergent concerns raised by two or more stakeholder groups, misalignment with continuing professional development principles, or ambiguity that could reduce feasibility in local settings. To strengthen trustworthiness, the analysis employed analyst triangulation and member checking of key summaries with a subset of participants. All changes were tracked to maintain a clear line of sight from comment

The resulting revisions improved the model's clarity, coherence, and contextual fit. Domain definitions and indicators were sharpened, and each professional learning routine was mapped to observable behaviors, artefacts, and short-term outcomes. A term-by-term implementation timeline was added, specifying cadence, role descriptions for mentors and facilitators, and resource estimates that are realistic for private preschools. To support monitoring and evaluation, the researcher developed activity rubrics, observation checklists, and templates for evidence capture, alongside a plan for pre- and post-assessment using the established domain scales and the Modified Priority Needs Index at the end of each term. Supervision and feasibility supports were elaborated, including guidance for scheduling protected time, pairing teachers for peer observation, and aligning school-level incentives with learning goals. Stakeholder engagement procedures were clarified to include structured parent feedback and periodic reporting to investors and community partners. Policy alignment notes were appended to ensure compliance with national and local regulations while preserving school-based flexibility. The finalized model, presented in Figure 4, provides an implementation-ready framework that is pedagogically grounded, operationally feasible, and suited to staged scale-up across private preschools in Guan Du District.

Conclusions

Drawing on a PRISMA-guided review and expert input, this study identified six core domains of teacher leadership for private preschools in Guan Du District—communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, innovation, and conflict management—and use

d them as the conceptual basis for measurement and model design. A districtwide survey of 384 teachers indicated high levels of both desired and current practices across all domains. The Modified Priority Needs Index prioritized development needs by revealing the largest gaps in communication and problem solving, moderate gaps in critical thinking and collaboration, and smaller gaps in innovation and conflict management. Integrating quantitative evidence with qualitative insights from nine local stakeholders, the study developed and validated a continuing professional development anchored model that centers the six domains, translates each into job embedded professional routines that can be rehearsed and observed in daily work, and embeds enabling conditions of continuity, contextualization, agency, and identity, professional learning communities, and systemic support. Expert validation refined terminology, sequencing, time allocation, supervision, and stakeholder roles, strengthening feasibility and coherence. To support implementation and evaluation, the model adds activity rubrics, observation checklists, a term-by-term timeline, mentor role descriptions, and a plan for pre- and post-assessment using domain scales and PNI_{modified} at the end of each term. Overall, the model offers a clear, actionable, and context-responsive pathway to enhance teacher leadership in private preschools in Guan Du District, Kunming. It provides a practical basis for staged implementation aligned with local policy expectations to advance educational quality in a sustained manner.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Teachers

Teachers should actively engage in the six professional learning routines identified in the model—Parent Partnership Lab, Co-Teaching Sprint, Reflect & Reframe Workshop, Solution Lab Challenge, Local Culture Innovation Studio, and Peace Talks Simulation. These routines offer structured opportunities to practice, reflect on, and refine leadership skills in authentic contexts. Teachers are advised to document their growth through professional portfolios, share artifacts with colleagues, and seek feedback to deepen collective learning. Emphasis should be placed on improving communication and problem-solving, which emerged as the most urgent areas of need, while also reinforcing collaboration, critical thinking, innovation, and conflict management. By embedding these practices into their professional identity, teachers not only enhance classroom practice but also serve as role models who cultivate a culture of leadership within their schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Recommendations for Principals and Administrators

Principals and administrators should establish enabling conditions that foster teacher leadership. This includes allocating protected time for professional learning communities, embedding mentoring opportunities, and formally recognizing leadership contributions within

appraisal systems. Tools such as progress dashboards and reflection logs can help track participation and outcomes. Incentives should extend beyond test results to acknowledge peer coaching, innovation projects, and conflict resolution. Leadership literature emphasizes that distributed leadership is sustainable only when institutional leaders model collaboration and provide systemic support (Leithwood et al., 2020; Spillane, 2006). Therefore, administrators are encouraged to adopt facilitative leadership styles that empower teachers while maintaining alignment with the school's mission and regulatory requirements.

Recommendations for Private Preschool Institutions

At the organizational level, preschools must incorporate the model into their strategic planning rather than treating it as a one-time intervention. A staged implementation is recommended: initially focusing on communication and problem-solving, then expanding to critical thinking and collaboration, and later consolidating innovation and conflict management. Institutions should embed parental engagement into these routines by inviting families to participate in cultural innovation projects or provide feedback on communication strategies. Even modest resource allocation, such as printing role-play cards, hiring substitutes during training, or purchasing materials for innovation activities, can yield significant returns. Schools are also advised to monitor outcomes such as parental satisfaction and conflict resolution to reinforce the value of continued investment (Stoll et al., 2006).

Recommendations for Universities and Teacher Educators

Universities and teacher education programs should integrate teacher leadership into pre-service and in-service training curricula. The validated model provides a research-based framework for designing modules that combine theoretical knowledge with practical leadership routines. Teacher educators can incorporate activities such as the Co-Teaching Sprint and Reflect & Reframe Workshop into coursework to cultivate collaborative and reflective practices among future educators. Moreover, partnerships between universities and private preschools can provide practicum opportunities where student teachers engage directly in leadership routines. Embedding leadership competencies into higher education programs will ensure that new teachers enter the workforce with the mindset and skills necessary to assume leadership roles in early childhood education.

Recommendations for Policymakers

Policymakers and district-level authorities should create supportive ecosystems that explicitly recognize and incentivize teacher leadership in private preschools. This includes establishing policy frameworks that value leadership competencies, offering micro-grants for

professional development initiatives, and incorporating leadership skills into teacher appraisal and accreditation systems. District-level communities of practice should be established to facilitate the exchange of resources and experiences across preschools. Partnerships with training institutes and universities can also formalize leadership learning through micro-credential pathways, thereby improving teacher retention and professional status. Evidence from international contexts indicates that aligning funding, recognition, and accountability systems with leadership development is crucial for sustaining reforms in early childhood education.

Recommendations for Researchers

Future researchers should extend the findings of this study by using longitudinal and comparative designs. Longitudinal research could track the impact of the six professional learning routines over multiple years, offering insights into sustainability, teacher retention, and child outcomes. Comparative studies between public and private preschools, or across different regions in China, could illuminate the contextual enablers and barriers to leadership development. Researchers should also refine measurement instruments by testing their reliability and validity across diverse populations, combining confirmatory factor analysis with qualitative methods such as classroom observations or parental focus groups. By expanding the evidence base, future research can enrich both local practice and international discourse, ensuring that teacher leadership remains a dynamic and evolving field of inquiry.

References

- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.
- Day, C., & Sachs, J. (Eds.). (2004). *International handbook on the continuing professional development of teachers*. Open University Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Hyle, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/effective-teacher-professional-development-report>
- Fonsén, E., Heikka, J., & Vlasov, J. (2023). *Leading pedagogical quality in early childhood education and care: A systematic review*. Early Years.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2023.2208336>
- Heikka, J., & Hujala, E. (2013). Early childhood leadership through the lens of distributed leadership. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 21(4), 568-580.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2013.845444>

- Ho, D., Wang, L., & He, M. (2019). Examining distributed leadership in early childhood education: A Chinese perspective. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(6), 1264-1278.
- Katz, R. L. (1955). Skills of an effective administrator. *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), 33-42.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). *Determining sample size for research activities*. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- National Education Association. (2010). *Preparing 21st century students for a global society: An educator's guide to the "Four Cs"*. National Education Association. <https://www.nea.org>
- Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Stoll, L., Bolam, R., McMahon, A., Wallace, M., & Thomas, S. (2006). Professional learning communities: A review of the literature. *Journal of Educational Change*, 7, 221-258. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-006-0001-8>
- Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. Jossey-Bass.
- Wang, M., & Zhang, L. (2024). *Teacher leadership in professional learning communities in early childhood education: A Chinese perspective*. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17411432241240604>
- Wenner, J. A., & Campbell, T. (2017). The theoretical and empirical basis of teacher leadership: A review of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(1), 134-171. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316653478>
- Xu, Y., Liu, Y., Huang, M., & Fang, H. (2024). Influence of kindergarten principals' contingent rewards on teachers' creative teaching performance: Testing a moderated-mediation model. *Work*, 78(2), 461-476. <https://doi.org/10.3233/WOR-230229>
- Yue, X., Ye, Y., Zheng, X., Feng, Y., Yang, Y., & Yang, Y. (2021). What about private kindergarten teachers' authentic leadership? The role of personality traits. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 10(5), 187-196. <https://doi.org/10.5539/jel.v10n5p187>
- Zhang, L., Wu, T., Liu, L., Ren, P., & Lin, C. (2022). The relationship between Chinese preschool principal leadership styles and teacher leadership: *Exploring the mediating effect of psychological capital*. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 1006184.