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Original Paper

External Institutional Empowerment and Teachers' Endogenous Agency: A Reciprocal Mechanism for Sustaining High-Quality Basic Education and Enhancing Professional Recognition

Liu Shihui[1] & Pan Jiaolan[2]

[1] Master of Education in Curriculum, UKM, Kajiang, Bangi, Malaysia, 43600

[2] PhD in Education(EAC), Postdoctoral Fellow in Quality Management (CEU), Senior Family Education Consultant, Foshan Wenhua School, China, 528205

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Abstract

Sustained quality advancement within basic education hinges not merely on teachers' personal competency and professional devotion, but also on institutional conditions that unlock their capacity for purpose-driven professional action. While existing scholarship has extensively explored teacher agentic capacity, professional growth and educational governance, few studies integrate these themes under a unified analytical lens. To fill this gap, this article constructs an integrated analytical framework to unpack the mutual interplay between externally-driven institutional enabling arrangements and teachers' internally-generated agentic capacity, with a view to sustaining basic-education quality and elevating teachers' professional standing.

Built upon the dynamic interplay between outer structural supports and inner professional motivations, this paper establishes a three-tier theoretical system: a core reciprocal operating mechanism, a four-component typology for institutional enabling support, and an interconnected model describing teachers' endogenous agentic capacity. External institutional supports cover policy safeguards, constructive organizational milieus, social occupational esteem, and tangible resource allocation. Such structural conditions can facilitate the reshaping of teachers' professional self-perceptions and activate their inner agentic resources, including intrinsic work motivation, self-directed lifelong learning, knowledge iteration, pedagogical discernment, reflective practice habits, and educational sense of responsibility. Collectively, these inner shifts foster transformative classroom practices, peer-to-peer professional collaboration, and steady quality improvement in schooling.

This study synthesizes these interactive dynamics and puts forward the PAITE analytical model, whose acronym stands for Proactive Institutional Empowerment, Agency and Professional Identity Reconstruction, Internal Agency Activation, Transformative Educational Practice, and Educational Excellence and Professional Recognition. Rather than describing a rigid step-by-step developmental path, PAITE frames these five elements as context-bound, mutually connected components operating within a circular institutional-professional feedback loop. Institutional structures pave the way for teacher development and agentic engagement; meanwhile, teachers' daily practices and educational contributions offer practical evidence to fuel institutional learning and governance updates.

Theoretically, this research merges institutional enabling mechanisms, teacher agentic capacity and occupational recognition into a reciprocal account of educational progress. It further redefines professional recognition as an outcome shaped by institutional settings: such recognition grows out of supportive working contexts and teachers' practical educational contributions, instead of being treated solely as personal rewards or the result of individual professional sacrifice. The PAITE model delivers conceptual groundwork for follow-up empirical inquiries, as well as fresh perspectives for revisiting teacher development strategies, educational governance designs, and long-term quality enhancement for basic education.

Keywords

teacher agentic capacity, institutional enabling support, reconstruction of professional self-identity, educational governance, sustained quality of basic education, occupational recognition, PAITE framework

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Long-term quality growth for basic education relies on policy reforms and institutional redesign, yet it equally depends on teachers' professional strengths and workplace environments that allow such strengths to unfold. As front-line professionals tasked with translating policy requirements, curriculum objectives and institutional priorities into real classroom activities, teachers occupy a decisive position in lifting educational quality and promoting institutional evolution. Their capacity for professional judgment, pedagogical creativity and continuous self-improvement exerts influence over both immediate teaching performance and schools' long-run adaptive potential.

Against this backdrop, global educational research has gradually shifted its understanding of teachers: they are no longer seen as passive implementers of preset curriculum schemes or recipients of top-down reform mandates, but as active professional actors. Topics including teacher agency, workplace learning and professional self-identity have moved to the center of debates on educational improvement. Nevertheless, a practical tension persists: societies and administrative systems keep raising performance expectations for teachers, while structural supports for their professional advancement often remain insufficient. Teachers are expected to launch pedagogical innovations and

take ownership of quality improvement, yet heavy administrative burdens, limited decision-making autonomy, material shortages and marginalized participation in institutional deliberations may prevent them from meeting such standards.

This tension raises a core practical puzzle: how are teachers able to maintain proactive professional engagement, when institutional frameworks fail to furnish adequate conditions for them to exercise such initiative?

This puzzle cannot be reduced to individual motivation gaps or insufficient personal expertise. It also concerns whether educational organizations create feasible pathways for teachers to turn professional aspirations into consistent on-the-job performance. Where organizational backing falls short, teacher growth may have to rely heavily on individual efforts, unfolding through informal, less visible channels. This article introduces the notion of constrained or concealed professional development to depict such potential organizational phenomena. It serves as a conceptual lens (rather than an empirically verified universal reality) to highlight possible misalignment between teachers' growth aspirations and the institutional acknowledgement or resources they receive.

Given such realities, we cannot fully understand educational progress by studying institutional interventions or individual professional commitment in isolation. It becomes critical to investigate how outer institutional enabling forces interact with teachers' inner agentic resources. Externally-oriented institutional enabling refers to structural, organizational, relational and material arrangements that make meaningful professional practice possible. Endogenous teacher agency points to teachers' inner set of professional beliefs, value orientations, self-understandings, evaluative judgment and intentional actions. The interplay of these two sets of factors forms the logical foundation for the PAITE model advanced in this paper.

1.2 Research Problem and Questions

Prior literature has yielded rich insights covering educational governance, institutional transformation, teacher professionalism and agentic capacity. Even so, existing scholarship seldom integrates these fragmented topics within one cohesive theoretical framework for interpreting sustainable quality growth in schooling.

Governance-focused studies tend to analyze policy frameworks, accountability rules, institutional capacity and resource distribution. Research centered on teacher agency, by contrast, emphasizes personal identity, life-course experience, inner motivation and situational opportunities. What remains under-theorized is how institutional systems systematically foster teacher agentic capacity, and in turn, how teachers' professional acts drive organizational reflection and institutional upgrading.

The core research challenge therefore goes beyond confirming whether institutional support shapes teacher agency. We need to unpack the reciprocal developmental logics linking these two sides. Institutional provisions will not automatically generate agentic conduct: effects are filtered through teachers' subjective interpretations, professional self-concepts and actionable opportunities. Similarly, individual devotion cannot permanently compensate for defective organizational surroundings.

Accordingly, this paper addresses the theoretical gap: the lack of holistic conceptual integration between external institutional enabling arrangements and teachers' endogenous agency within reciprocal educational governance research. Three guiding research questions steer this analysis:

Q1.Institutional-level tensions: What structural and organizational frictions emerge when educational systems demand higher levels of professional proactivity from teachers, without matching institutional safeguards and resources?

Q2.Developmental mechanisms: Through what conceptual pathways can multi-faceted institutional enabling support cultivate and sustain teachers' endogenous agentic capacity?

Q3.Reciprocal governance outcomes: How does the interaction between institutional enabling structures and inner teacher agency contribute to durable quality gains in basic education and strengthen teachers' occupational recognition?Collectively, these questions progress from identifying institutional frictions, to exploring developmental pathways, and finally building a holistic theoretical account of two-way educational governance.

1.3 Significance of the Study

1.3.1 Theoretical Significance

This work contributes to teacher-development and governance research by placing institutional contexts and teacher agentic capacity into one unified analytical system. Drawing inspiration from ecological perspectives on teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015), this study treats agency not as fixed personal trait, but as an achievement generated through person-environment interactions. Three major theoretical contributions are put forward.

First, this article constructs a reciprocal explanatory logic connecting institutional enabling arrangements and endogenous teacher agency. Institutional settings furnish prerequisites for professional action; at the same time, teachers' evaluative judgments, peer collaboration and pedagogical creativity produce feedback signals that push institutions toward adjustment and organizational learning.

Second, it develops a process-oriented account of agentic capacity. It illustrates how institutional supports facilitate shifts in professional identity, ongoing learning, autonomous judgment and instructional innovation. These connections are context-dependent and mediated by teachers' subjective professional interpretations; institutional interventions cannot bring about such changes in a mechanical, automatic fashion.

Third, the paper re-conceptualizes occupational recognition as a relational, institution-embedded dimension of teacher professionalism. Beyond personal achievement or public praise, genuine recognition entails respecting professional expertise, preserving developmental opportunities, and guaranteeing teachers' meaningful involvement in educational decision-making.

The PAITE framework assembles these dimensions from a governance-oriented viewpoint. Its value lies in weaving institutional enabling conditions, inner professional growth and two-way organizational learning within a unified conceptual architecture.

1.3.2 Practical Significance

In practical terms, this framework offers fresh reference points for education administrators, school leadership teams and broader society to rethink how to back teacher professional advancement.

For educational authorities, it underscores the necessity of aligning performance expectations with solid policy safeguards, manageable workload standards, sufficient material inputs and accessible professional-learning pathways. For school leaders, it highlights the importance of professional trust, collaborative workplace culture, organizational assistance and genuine teacher participation in institutional decision-making. For society at large, it draws attention to recognizing teaching as a skill-intensive, socially consequential occupation: this requires respect for professional expertise plus tangible institutional acknowledgement.

Additionally, the framework encourages educational institutions to self-examine whether administrative procedures or embedded organizational cultures unintentionally suppress teacher learning and career progression. It advocates a reciprocal governance mindset: institutions build conditions for teachers to grow, while also valuing teachers' contributions toward organizational improvement and educational quality uplift.

1.4 Research Approach and Conceptual Development

This paper adopts theory-building conceptual analysis, grounded in critical engagement with existing literature regarding ecological teacher agency, professional identity, workplace learning, institutional support and educational governance. It does not report original empirical data, nor does it seek to prove causal relationships. Its objective is to build an integrated conceptual model to inform future theoretical debate and field-based investigations.

Conceptual construction unfolds across six interconnected phases: (1) pinpointing frictions between rising professional expectations and insufficient institutional enabling conditions; (2) critical review of relevant theoretical stances; (3) clarifying core constructs including institutional enabling support, endogenous teacher agency, occupational recognition and reciprocal organizational learning; (4) mapping relational patterns linking institutional contexts and teacher agentic capacity; (5) synthesizing these connections to establish the five-component PAITE model; (6) deriving theoretical implications and testable propositions for subsequent empirical work.

The analytical strategy distinguishes outer contextual enablers from inner professional mental processes, without treating them as fully isolated or mechanically sequential. Institutional structures shape action possibilities for teachers; teachers interpret, negotiate and make use of such possibilities according to their professional self-understandings and practical judgments. Teachers' practices may feed organizational learning, yet such potential hinges on institutional responsiveness and inclusive decision-making mechanisms.

Therefore, educational advancement is framed as iterative, context-sensitive two-way dynamics. Institutional enabling measures create necessary prerequisites rather than guarantees for agentic practice; endogenous agency always evolves within given institutional and social milieus. Their

interaction helps explain how education systems can move beyond fragmented reform projects toward durable professional growth, organizational learning and better basic-education outcomes.

2. Literature Review and Identification of the Research Gap

2.1 Research on Teacher Agency and Professional Development

Teacher agency has grown into a key construct within educational scholarship, especially in curriculum-reform, teacher-professionalism and educational-change studies. Contemporary research increasingly rejects the view of teachers as mere executors of externally imposed policies. Instead, teachers are understood as active professionals who interpret policy goals, exercise discretionary judgment and make context-sensitive instructional choices. Analyzing educational improvement thus demands simultaneous attention to institutional contexts and teachers' capacity to act purposefully within those contexts.

The ecological model developed by Priestley, Biesta and Robinson (2015) represents an influential theoretical reference. Under this framework, teacher agency counts as a realized outcome stemming from interactions between individual capabilities and cultural, structural, material features of work environments. Agency is neither an in-born personal characteristic, nor a direct product of professional knowledge and technical competence. It is situationally contingent, molded by teachers' past experiences, future aspirations and real-world working constraints and resources.

Likewise, Biesta et al. (2015) highlight how personal professional values and institutional circumstances jointly shape teacher conduct. This perspective pushes back against accounts that place nearly all responsibility for educational improvement on individual teachers. Even highly motivated educators may find their agentic capacity constrained when personal professional commitments clash with organizational norms and institutional demands. Conversely, supportive workplace surroundings enable practitioners to translate specialized expertise into meaningful classroom practice.

Research exploring professional identity further demonstrates the fluid nature of teacher agency. For instance, Vähäsantanen (2015) documents how agentic orientations get renegotiated amid organizational transitions, through interactions among personal resources, professional self-concepts and managerial cultures. Professional identity should accordingly be seen as an ongoing negotiation process: teachers continuously renegotiate personal values, role obligations and positional status amid shifting institutional contexts.

Taken collectively, these viewpoints suggest teacher professional development extends far beyond knowledge acquisition and technical skill building. It also covers identity negotiation, reflective judgment and active participation in educational transformation. Even so, further conceptual elaboration remains necessary: we need clearer accounts of how institutional arrangements systematically foster agentic capacity, and how teachers' practical acts in return drive organizational advancement.

To fill this space, the present study defines endogenous agency as the internally oriented yet context-shaped dimension of teacher agentic capacity. It encompasses professional value systems, self-identity, inner motivation, reflective judgment and intentional conduct through which teachers perceive and respond to workplace realities. This term does not imply agency develops free from institutional influences. Instead, it directs analytical focus toward inner psychological-professional processes: how teachers spot actionable opportunities, claim autonomy and contribute to educational upgrading.

2.2 Research on Institutional Empowerment and Educational Governance

Educational governance scholarship notes that sustainable reform cannot rely solely on policy blueprints. Equally vital are institutional arrangements translating policy goals into day-to-day professional activity. Policies, organizational structures, leadership patterns and resource allocation jointly define teachers' responsibilities, collaborative opportunities and space for professional judgment. Institutional environments are not neutral backdrops; they actively set boundaries and possibilities for professional action.

Such understandings align with the ecological teacher-agency framework of Priestley et al. (2015), which marks structural and cultural conditions as core preconditions for agentic achievement. Teaching-quality policies deliver limited impact when extra work assignments are rolled out without matching time budgets, autonomy guarantees or organizational assistance. In parallel, professional-development initiatives produce no lasting improvement if teachers cannot apply newly acquired knowledge or join substantive professional dialogue.

Building on such insights, this paper divides external institutional enabling support into four mutually connected dimensions: policy safeguards, supportive organizational milieus, social occupational esteem, and sustainable resource allocation.

First, policy safeguards stand for regulatory and institutional mechanisms defending teachers' legitimate professional rights and role boundaries. This includes reasonable workload limits, transparent administrative workflows, space for professional autonomy and protected access to ongoing learning chances. Formal regulations carry little weight unless translated into practically usable professional opportunities.

Second, supportive organizational milieus cover cultural, relational and managerial conditions inside schools. Professional trust, collaborative peer relations, inclusive leadership, psychological safety and meaningful voice in institutional decision-making strengthen teachers' willingness and capacity to exercise discretionary judgment. By contrast, over-intrusive administrative oversight and top-heavy hierarchical governance suppress agentic practice.

Third, social occupational esteem refers to societal valuation of teaching as skill-demanding work with far-reaching social consequences. It goes beyond symbolic praise, requiring respect for teacher expertise and pedagogical judgment within institutional decision-making, public discourse and broader social interactions.

Fourth, sustainable resource allocation includes material, organizational and developmental inputs required for agentic professional performance. Relevant resources cover mentorship schemes, research access, professional-learning communities, digital infrastructure, instructional materials and transparent career pathways. Resource effectiveness depends not only on availability but also accessibility and alignment with teachers' actual professional needs.

Although analytically separable, these four dimensions operate interdependently. Policy safeguards lose practical value without adequate resources; resource investments yield weak outcomes in absence of collaborative organizational cultures. Similarly, social respect means little without professional autonomy and reasonable working conditions. Their combined functioning offers a governance-focused lens for examining how institutions sustain teacher growth and agentic engagement.

It is critical to emphasize: institutional enabling support must not be misread as top-down institutional control over teaching staff. Its purpose is constructing enabling contexts, where professional self-determination, sense of responsibility and institutional accountability can coexist.

2.3 Research on Teacher Professional Recognition and Occupational Value

Existing discussions about teaching's occupational significance frequently center on educational accountability, ethical conduct, learner-centered devotion and public contributions. While these themes remain important, over-individualized interpretations risk overlooking institutional prerequisites for teachers to fulfill role obligations and sustain career-long growth.

Society commonly holds teachers to standards of dedication, resilience, accountability and continuous self-improvement. Nevertheless, personal professional commitment cannot substitute for sufficient institutional backing. When growing work burdens are assigned without corresponding resources, social esteem or developmental openings, educational quality improvement becomes disproportionately dependent on individual teachers' personal efforts. This generates imbalance between institutional expectations for professional contribution and the structural responsibilities borne by education systems.

A more balanced analytical perspective frames occupational recognition as relational reciprocity between individual contribution and institutional obligation. Teachers bring specialized expertise, professional discernment and sustained effort toward educational advancement; institutions and wider societies, in return, bear duties to acknowledge such contributions, safeguard reasonable working conditions and deliver viable growth pathways.

Within this article, occupational recognition denotes institutional, organizational and societal acknowledgement of teachers' specialized expertise, practical contributions, professional judgment and developmental demands. It encompasses professional autonomy, decent working arrangements, career progression, participation in educational deliberation and broad-based social valuation for the teaching occupation.

Three interrelated constructs deserve clear differentiation. Occupational recognition refers to acknowledgement of professional expertise and status. Professional dignity stands for normative entitlements to respectful treatment, legitimate professional entitlements and self-determination at work. Professional fulfilment captures subjective experiences of meaning, achievement and job satisfaction. Though interlinked, these terms are not interchangeable: recognition and dignity may support fulfilment, yet they cannot guarantee it.

The original Chinese manuscript employs wording conveying normative aspirations for teachers' occupational dignity and social honor. For international academic exchange, this study adopts the more analytically precise terminology of occupational recognition and professional dignity, while preserving the core normative goal of elevating teaching's social value and standing.

In the PAITE model, occupational recognition functions both as an enabler and developmental outcome of institutional relationships. It manifests not merely through celebrating teacher contributions, but via structural arrangements that allow agentic practice, participatory governance and institutional upgrading. Recognition thus becomes an indispensable component of long-run educational governance, rather than a simple reward for individual achievement.

2.4 Synthesis of the Research Gaps

Prior literature furnishes solid foundations for understanding teacher agentic capacity, professional identity, workplace contexts and occupational recognition. This paper does not claim these themes have been completely ignored by existing studies. Instead, it identifies three conceptual integration gaps that open space for further theoretical development around institutional enabling arrangements and teacher agency.

2.4.1 Demand for a Holistic Reciprocal Analytical Lens

Ecological perspectives have confirmed teacher agency emerges through interactions between personal capacities and situational contexts. Organizational-culture, leadership and professional-development research likewise document institutional environments' impacts on teacher experiences. Even so, further theoretical integration is needed: we need clearer explanations for how institutional configurations jointly cultivate agentic capacity, and how teachers' professional outputs in turn reshape institutional development.

Teachers are far more than passive beneficiaries of institutional support. Via practical judgment, peer collaboration, reflective practice and instructional innovation, they generate organizational knowledge, challenge conventional routines and promote institutional adjustment.

The PAITE framework addresses this gap by treating external institutional enabling structures and endogenous teacher agency as mutually shaping components of educational governance. Institutional supports create prerequisites for professional practice; teachers' agentic conduct generates practical knowledge to fuel organizational learning and refine governance systems. This reciprocal proposition forms a core theoretical claim of the model, without presuming all agentic teacher behavior automatically delivers institutional improvement.

2.4.2 Need to Unpack Developmental Linkages Between Institutional Supports and Teacher Agency

Existing scholarship explores professional belief systems, workplace relations and teacher responses to educational change. Still, conceptual clarification remains needed regarding how institutional supports interact with inner professional processes that produce and sustain agentic performance.

Specifically, the connections between institutional enablers, professional identity, self-directed learning, professional competence, educational responsibility and transformative classroom practice call for more systematic theoretical synthesis.

PAITE responds by grouping these themes under interconnected dimensions of endogenous agency. These dimensions offer analytical leverage for investigating how teachers reconstruct professional self-understanding, engage in autonomous learning, build professional competence, embrace educational accountability and carry out transformative practice. They can be separated for analytical purposes yet frequently overlap and interact.

Crucially, this structure does not describe universal linear developmental stages. Teachers may experience multiple processes concurrently, revisit certain developmental dimensions, or face institutional and personal barriers. The model seeks to illustrate potential interaction patterns, rather than impose fixed developmental trajectories.

2.4.3 Re-theorizing Occupational Recognition as Reciprocal Institutional Relations

Scholars have analyzed occupational recognition in connection with teachers' social prestige, professional self-identity and educational contributions. Less attention has been directed toward its links with institutional accountability and contextual prerequisites sustaining agentic capacity.

PAITE re-conceptualizes occupational recognition as a reciprocal institutional relationship, instead of mere social praise or compensation for individual accomplishment. Teachers contribute expertise, practical judgment and ethical commitment toward educational advancement; institutions hold corresponding responsibilities to safeguard professional dignity, create growth opportunities and validate practitioner contributions.

Recognition is therefore embedded within institutional mechanisms safeguarding autonomy, participatory governance, developmental pathways and decent working conditions. It carries both normative significance regarding teaching's social worth and practical governance implications for institutional duties.

By integrating occupational recognition into the relational system linking institutional enabling arrangements, endogenous agency and institutional evolution, PAITE offers pathways for studying how institutional routines validate teacher contributions, and how supportive structural settings strengthen teacher engagement in educational upgrading.

Collectively, these three identified gaps justify the construction of PAITE. Its theoretical contribution lies in merging four dimensions of external institutional enabling support with a context-sensitive process model of endogenous teacher agency, further extending analysis to two-way organizational learning and occupational recognition. Instead of treating institutional support, teacher agency and

occupational value as isolated topics, this framework maps their interconnections within broader sustainable educational-governance analysis.

3. Conceptual Definitions and Theoretical Foundations

3.1 Definition of Key Concepts

3.1.1 External Institutional Empowerment (External Institutional Enabling Support)

External institutional enabling support refers to coordinated structural conditions established by education authorities, school administrations and social stakeholders, so teachers can develop and deploy their professional agentic capacity. It includes four interlocking components: policy safeguards, constructive organizational milieus, social occupational esteem, and sustainable resource allocation.

Governance guided by enabling logic differs from compliance-driven administrative modes that prioritize supervision and standardization. Enabling-oriented governance aims to build contexts for discretionary professional judgment, accountable autonomy and meaningful stakeholder participation. This approach does not weaken accountability expectations; on the contrary, it advocates aligning accountability requirements with appropriate decision-making authority, institutional trust and accessible resources. Institutional enabling support serves as facilitative preconditions, rather than mechanisms dictating specific professional behaviors.

3.1.2 Teachers' Endogenous Agency

Teachers' endogenous agency describes inner-oriented professional dispositions and capabilities, through which educators interpret workplace realities, exercise practical judgment and pursue purpose-driven career development. It covers professional self-identity, educational value commitments, intrinsic motivation, self-directed learning, reflective discernment and devotion to instructional improvement.

The adjective "endogenous" highlights inner professional dimensions, without suggesting such capacities form independently of outside contextual forces. Consistent with ecological-perspective literature, agentic capacity arises from constant interactions among personal capabilities, professional experiences and cultural-structural-material workplace conditions (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestley et al., 2015).

Within PAITE, six interlinked dimensions define endogenous agency: (1) reconstruction of professional self-identity; (2) self-directed lifelong learning; (3) holistic professional-competence building; (4) deepened educational accountability; (5) transformative instructional practice; (6) commitment to broader educational-social obligations. These dimensions capture evolution in professional identity, knowledge reservoirs, sense of responsibility and educational outputs. Analytically distinguishable, they mutually shape one another instead of unfolding as sequential developmental phases.

3.1.3 The Reciprocal Interaction Mechanism

The reciprocal interaction mechanism describes how institutional contexts foster agentic capacity, how teachers translate agency into educational practice, and how practical outputs feed subsequent institutional adjustment. It comprises three interwoven subprocesses: institutional enablement, professional enactment, and institutional feedback. Institutional configurations open up action possibilities and mitigate structural obstacles; teachers make sense of and utilize such conditions through professional judgment; the resulting practical experiences furnish grounds for institutional reflection and revision.

The relational logic can be summarized as: Institutional Enabling Support → Teachers' Endogenous Agentic Capacity → Educational Practice → Institutional Learning ↺

This feedback loop operates neither automatically nor deterministically. Its effectiveness hinges on institutional responsiveness, practitioner competence, resource sufficiency and broader educational contexts.

3.2 The Three-Level Theoretical Architecture

The PAITE system contains three complementary theoretical models. The first lays out over-arching reciprocal relations between institutional enabling structures and teacher agentic capacity. The second specifies outer contextual supports sustaining these relations. The third unpacks inner dimensions along which teachers build and exercise agentic capacity.

3.2.1 Model One: The Overarching Reciprocal Interaction Model

This overarching conceptual model treats external institutional enabling support and teachers' endogenous agency as mutually dependent cornerstones for durable educational advancement.

Institutional enabling structures deliver structural and organizational prerequisites for professional action. Endogenous agentic capacity empowers teachers to interpret contextual conditions, apply practical judgment and convert available opportunities into real-world educational practice. Institutional provisions without active teacher engagement risk becoming administratively formalized yet educationally underutilized. Conversely, personal expertise and devotion cannot sustain quality improvement when structural barriers block professional growth and participatory rights.

Three subprocesses constitute their interaction: enablement (institutions build supportive contexts); professional enactment (teachers turn contextual resources into practice); institutional feedback (professional experiences fuel organizational learning). Durable educational quality gains are thus interactive outcomes combining institutional design and professional practice, rather than products stemming purely from individual dedication or top-down administrative interventions.

3.2.2 Model Two: The Four-Dimensional External Enabling Model

This four-component model specifies institutional configurations designed to nurture teacher agentic capacity.

Proactive policy safeguards grant formal legitimacy for professional self-determination via reasonable workload limits, transparent performance expectations, protection against arbitrary administrative

restrictions, and guaranteed access to professional-learning activities. Under such arrangements, teachers exercise discretionary judgment while remaining subject to appropriate accountability rules.

Constructive organizational milieus shape teachers' day-to-day professional realities. Professional trust, collaborative learning communities, solution-oriented leadership, room for instructional experimentation and staff participation in organizational deliberations create space for teachers to show initiative and refine professional practice.

Social occupational esteem and professional respect reflect societal valuation for teacher expertise and educational contributions. Esteem goes beyond symbolic compliments: it demands practitioner participation, respect for instructional judgment and genuine involvement within educational policy deliberation.

Sustainable resource allocation supplies material, intellectual and developmental infrastructure for professional advancement, covering mentorship, training programs, research access, academic documents, digital facilities and professional networks. Resource value depends on practical accessibility, relevance to real-world work and chances for on-job application.

These dimensions operate as connected institutional systems: policies establish normative legitimacy; organizational cultures shape daily professional opportunities; social esteem lifts occupational status; resources deliver practical instruments for growth. Deficiencies within any single dimension will impair the effectiveness of remaining components.

3.2.3 Model Three: The Developmental Model of Teachers' Endogenous Agency

This developmental model illustrates six dimensions through which endogenous agency gets cultivated and manifested.

First, reconstruction of professional self-identity relates to teachers' self-understanding as knowledgeable professionals equipped for discretionary judgment and institutional contribution. Second, self-directed lifelong learning translates this renewed self-perception into consistent independent study, collaborative inquiry and critical reflective habits.

Third, holistic professional-competence building merges subject-matter mastery, instructional know-how, theoretical insights and practical experience to strengthen evidence-based professional judgment. Fourth, deepened educational accountability signals growing commitment to educational ethics, learner diversity, equity goals and professional accountability standards.

Fifth, transformative instructional practice represents tangible expression of agentic capacity: this includes curriculum adaptation, learning-material development and context-responsive instructional decision-making. Transformation is defined against educational relevance and learner demands, instead of innovation pursued for its own sake.

Sixth, commitment to broader educational-social obligations expands professional impact beyond individual classrooms, through mentorship, peer collaboration, curriculum development and engagement in school-wide quality-improvement projects.

These dimensions reinforce one another rather than following strict chronological sequences. Professional learning reshapes self-identity; instructional trials deepen accountability awareness; cross-school professional participation opens further learning possibilities. Accordingly, this model bridges individual career-level growth and collective educational contributions.

3.3 The Dialectical Relationship Between External and Internal Dynamics

PAITE's theoretical foundation rejects explanations that attribute teacher agentic capacity solely to institutional settings or purely to individual personal traits. Instead, agentic capacity emerges out of continuous mutual interplay between these two sets of forces.

Outer institutional configurations shape available resources and constraints teachers encounter. Inner professional orientations govern how teachers interpret, negotiate and make use of contextual conditions. Institutional enabling measures establish necessary prerequisites for agentic practice, yet cannot guarantee positive professional or educational results.

Their reciprocal functions remain differentiated. Institutions hold responsibility for constructing and maintaining supportive contextual conditions. Teachers exercise agentic capacity via situated professional judgment and practical action. Sound policies, supportive leadership and sufficient resources cannot guarantee instructional innovation; in parallel, high personal motivation cannot indefinitely offset excessive workloads, resource shortages or restrictive organizational cultures.

Institutional influence is not one-directional. Within daily practice, teachers may reproduce existing institutional routines, negotiate administrative expectations, or push organizational transformation. When practitioners' experiences and contributions receive institutional acknowledgement and feed organizational reflection, this may drive policy revision, resource reallocation and organizational learning.

PAITE therefore conceptualizes long-run educational advancement as an ongoing cycle: institutional enablement, agentic professional practice, and reciprocal organizational learning. Its core theoretical proposition holds that institutional conditions and teacher agentic capacity are mutually constitutive components of educational governance, requiring both structural support and active professional participation.

4. The PAITE Conceptual Framework

4.1 Rationale and Overall Structure

Drawing from foregoing theoretical arguments and relational analysis, this article puts forward the PAITE conceptual model, an integrated analytical tool for investigating how institutional enabling structures and teacher agentic capacity jointly foster durable educational quality improvement.

Many existing research traditions treat institutional configurations, teacher growth and educational outcomes as relatively separate domains. PAITE addresses such conceptual fragmentation: it frames educational advancement as dynamic cyclic processes. Institutional contexts unlock agentic capacity;

teachers convert professional strengths into on-site educational practice; resulting practical outputs in turn inform institutional reflection and governance renewal.

PAITE consists of five interconnected analytical dimensions: P – Proactive Institutional Empowerment A – Agency and Professional Identity Reconstruction I – Internal Agency Activation T – Transformative Educational Practice E – Educational Excellence and Professional Recognition

These five dimensions can be distinguished analytically but remain mutually dependent components of educational advancement. P builds institutional prerequisites for agentic capacity; A captures teachers' subjective interpretation and reshaping of professional self-understanding; I describes mobilization of inner professional strengths; T analyzes how agentic capacity translates into concrete educational activities; E covers wider educational and professional consequences.

The model differentiates contextual prerequisites for agency, inner developmental processes of agentic capacity, and observable end-results of educational practice. Importantly, these dimensions do not constitute rigid fixed sequences. Their interconnections are reciprocal, context-sensitive and subject to institutional and socio-cultural surroundings.

4.2 The Five Dimensions of PAITE

4.2.1 P: Proactive Institutional Empowerment

Proactive Institutional Empowerment forms the institutional bedrock of PAITE. Building on the external enabling-support concept elaborated within chapter three, this dimension analyzes how governance systems and school-level organizational arrangements build and sustain conditions favorable to teacher agentic capacity.

Its core characteristic is forward-looking rather than merely reactive governance logic. Instead of focusing chiefly on administrative compliance or post-hoc solutions for existing professional difficulties, proactive enabling support anticipates emerging practitioner demands and constructs arrangements inviting teacher participation in institutional improvement.

Concrete arrangements include policy safeguards, appropriate decision-making authority, collaborative organizational milieus, protected professional-learning time and sustainable resource allocation.

P accordingly represents facilitative institutional architecture. Its practical value depends less on formal policy documents or resource inventories, and more on whether such structures deliver real-world chances for teachers to apply professional judgment, assume responsibility and participate in educational upgrading.

4.2.2 A: Agency and Professional Identity Reconstruction

Dimension A covers interpretative mental processes, through which institutional opportunities gain practical professional meaning for teaching staff. It bridges outer structural arrangements (P) and teachers' subjective understandings of professional roles, decision-making authority and role-related responsibilities.

Institutional enabling provisions will not mechanically produce agentic performance. Teachers filter institutional expectations and available opportunities through pre-existing belief systems, career

experiences and subjective perceptions of their organizational standing. Identical institutional setups may therefore trigger divergent responses among individual educators and across different school contexts.

Within PAITE, reconstruction of professional self-identity means continuous evolution in teachers' professional self-conceptions, responding to shifting institutional expectations and newly available opportunities. It involves recognizing the worth of specialized professional expertise, acknowledging the legitimacy of discretionary pedagogical judgment, and re-evaluating boundaries for individual contributions toward institutional improvement.

Dimension A thus operates as the interpretative linkage connecting institutional enabling structures and subsequent activation of inner agentic resources. It highlights the central role of teachers' professional self-understanding: externally supplied resources can turn into real-world professional initiative only when they carry subjective meaning for practitioners.

4.2.3 I: Internal Agency Activation

Whereas A focuses on interpretation and reshaping of professional self-concept, dimension I describes the degree to which teachers mobilize professional strengths via sustained engagement and intentional practical action.

Internal Agency Activation encompasses six interrelated components:

Self-directed continuous professional learning

Subject-matter mastery and instructional expertise

Professional discernment and reflective capacities

Educational accountability and ethical commitments

Professional adaptability and instructional initiative

Engagement with broader professional communities

Collectively these components stand for capacities and orientations teachers deploy to exercise agentic practice. They are not isolated personal traits, but mutually reinforcing functional aspects of professional work, shaped by past experience and organizational contexts.

A core concern lies in converting personal professional devotion into purposeful action. Inner motivation, self-confidence and initiative generate practical influence only when paired with knowledge, evaluative discernment and competence to respond to evolving educational demands.

I functions as the action-oriented dimension for agentic capacity inside PAITE, separating mobilized professional strengths from institutional prerequisites and identity-related interpretative processes.

4.2.4 T: Transformative Educational Practice

Dimension T investigates agentic capacity manifested through context-adapted educational practice. It analyzes how teachers translate professional competence and discretionary judgment into instructional decisions, curriculum-related activities and collaborative work.

Concrete manifestations include curriculum reading and localized adaptation, differentiated instructional planning, self-developed learning materials, formative assessment implementation, collective curriculum design and tailored responses toward diverse learner profiles.

Practical transformation is valued for linking professional judgment with learner needs and institutional realities. Innovation should never be pursued for novelty alone. Meaningful transformation must rest on pedagogical justification, ethical accountability and alignment with core educational missions.

T constitutes PAITE's practical-practice dimension. It supplies analytical groundwork for studying how agentic capacity manifests within teaching-learning activities and curriculum implementation.

4.2.5 E: Educational Excellence and Professional Recognition

Dimension E captures broad-scope educational and professional outputs generated throughout PAITE developmental cycles. It includes two interlinked yet analytically separate sub-components.

Educational excellence points toward steady improvement of schooling quality, inclusiveness, contextual responsiveness and professional standards. It extends beyond student academic achievement, covering educational practices' and institutions' capacity to accommodate diverse learner requirements and adapt constructively amid social shifts.

Occupational recognition denotes institutional and societal acknowledgement of teachers' specialized expertise, practical judgment and on-the-job contributions. It reflects the extent to which practitioner efforts receive formal organizational and social validation.

These two sub-components ought to be assessed independently. Improved schooling quality does not automatically bring higher occupational recognition; likewise, enhanced social esteem for teachers cannot by itself prove actual improvements within teaching-learning provision.

E acts as PAITE's dual-outcome dimension, simultaneously tracking educational practice consequences and teachers' status within institutional-societal structures.

4.3 The Operational Logic of the PAITE Framework

The primary developmental sequence within PAITE can be expressed as: $P \rightarrow A \rightarrow I \rightarrow T \rightarrow E$

Meanwhile reciprocal feedback relations exist: $E \rightarrow P$ (renewed Proactive Institutional Empowerment, noted as P')

The first formula describes the analytical flow: starting from institutional enabling conditions, moving through professional-identity reconstruction and inner-agentic activation, toward transformative practice and final educational-professional outcomes.

The second formula illustrates outcome-driven institutional renewal. Evidence of quality improvement and validated professional contributions may feed policy revision, organizational learning, resource redistribution and governance readjustment. P' signifies updated institutional enabling configurations rather than adding a sixth model dimension.

This operational logic should not be read as rigid linear deterministic chains. Multiple dimensions may interact simultaneously; institutional conditions may shape teaching practice via both direct and

indirect pathways. PAITE is accordingly framed as dynamic reciprocal developmental framework instead of fixed causal developmental phases.

4.4 Theoretical Propositions Derived from PAITE

Five theoretical propositions emerge from PAITE, guiding follow-up conceptual reflection and empirical research.

Proposition 1: Institutional enabling conditions. Higher coherence and practical accessibility for institutional enabling arrangements correlate positively with teachers' available opportunities for exercising professional agentic capacity.

Proposition 2: Professional identity and interpretation of institutional supports. Teachers' professional self-concepts, perceptions of autonomy, legitimacy and organizational backing shape how they understand and utilize institutional enabling provisions.

Proposition 3: Inner agentic resources and professional enactment. Teachers' professional initiative, expertise and reflective capacities correlate positively with adaptive, ethically-grounded and pedagogically-informed educational practice; such connections become more salient under supportive workplace conditions.

Proposition 4: Transformative practice and educational outputs. Context-responsive educational practice, supported by peer collaboration and systematic reflection, can contribute toward improved schooling quality, inclusiveness and capacity to meet diverse learner demands.

Proposition 5: Educational outputs and institutional renewal. Educational practice outcomes plus validated professional contributions can facilitate organizational learning, governance revision and subsequent upgrading of institutional enabling arrangements.

Taken together these propositions lay out major relational expectations embedded within PAITE. They represent theoretical conjectures rather than proven causal laws. Their explanatory power, empirical validity and contextual applicability await further investigation.

4.5 Conditions and Boundaries of the Framework

PAITE is presented as context-sensitive analytical tool rather than universally applicable educational-development blueprint. Its explanatory power depends on institutional, organizational and socio-cultural milieus within which its five dimensions interact.

At organizational level, leadership styles, administrative structures, accountability mechanisms, employment terms and resource distribution will determine whether institutional enabling policies translate into real professional opportunities. At individual level, teachers' career experience, deep-rooted belief systems, expertise and sense of responsibility shape engagement with identity reconstruction and inner-agentic activation.

Moreover, socio-cultural norms regarding professional authority, institutional hierarchy and educational accountability will influence how autonomy and occupational recognition get understood and enacted. Identical institutional configurations can accordingly generate divergent professional responses and educational results.

This framework also draws a dividing line between professional enabling support and unlimited personal discretionary power. Teacher agentic capacity always operates subject to legitimate educational obligations, professional standards and learners' rights and practical needs. Institutional backing aims to foster responsible professional judgment, rather than dismantle organizational and ethical boundaries governing teaching work.

Overall, PAITE delivers integrated conceptual foundations for analyzing interactions linking institutional enabling arrangements, professional self-identity, inner agentic capacity and transformative instructional practice to sustain educational quality advancement. Its theoretical merit lies in connecting institutional contexts, teacher development and educational outputs, while highlighting reciprocal processes where practitioner contributions drive institutional upgrading.

5. Discussion, Theoretical Contributions and Governance Implications

5.1 Rethinking the Relationship Between Institutional Responsibility and Teacher Agency

We cannot fully account for lasting quality gains in basic education if we rely exclusively on individual-centered understandings of teacher professionalism. There is little room for argument that teachers' devotion, domain-specific knowledge and workplace initiative shape classroom outcomes. Even so, the extent to which these personal strengths can be brought into play is heavily constrained by institutional realities teachers face day-by-day.

Priestley and his research partners' ecological perspective (2015) provides a valuable analytical foundation for unpacking such interplay between individuals and contextual surroundings. Their work frames teacher agency as situation-bound and relationally constructed, rather than an in-built personal trait. Building upon such theoretical resources, the PAITE framework makes one practical point explicit: educational governing bodies hold real-world obligations to create actionable professional opportunities, instead of merely setting up performance targets for teaching staff.

This conceptual distinction carries tangible practical significance. Educational governance is not limited to issuing professional standards and monitoring outcome-oriented performance indicators. It also requires authorities to put supporting structures in place. With such structures, teachers are able to exercise well-grounded pedagogical judgement, pursue continuous professional learning, and get involved in school-level improvement projects. A structural mismatch will emerge when administrative departments keep calling for constant instructional innovation, yet fail to supply corresponding collaborative space or learning resources. Expectations placed on teachers will then go beyond what existing institutional arrangements can realistically support.

The cyclic logic embedded within PAITE — Proactive Institutional Empowerment (P), Agency and Professional Identity Reconstruction (A), Internal Agency Activation (I), Transformative Educational Practice (T), and Educational Excellence and Professional Recognition (E) — helps us interpret this structural contradiction. Institutional enabling conditions lay necessary prerequisites, yet they are never capable of triggering agentic behaviour in a mechanical fashion. Policy measures and resource inputs

will go through individual educators' self-perception, accumulated professional competence, plus their subjective reading of workplace contexts before generating practical effects.

Seen from this angle, institutional empowerment counts as a necessary precondition, but never a sufficient guarantee for improved educational performance. This viewpoint preserves teachers' space for professional discretion. Meanwhile, it writes institutional accountability directly into the analytical logic for pursuing long-term educational quality.

5.2 Reinterpreting Constrained Professional Development

One notable practical insight derived from this framework relates to teachers whose career-growth aspirations receive insufficient institutional backing. The construct of constrained or concealed professional development highlights possible misalignment between individual teachers' pursuit of professional progress and structural limits embedded within their working environments.

Traditional assessment approaches for teacher development tend to emphasise quantifiable formal markers: attendance at official training workshops, newly-obtained qualifications, and formal promotion records. These indicators still serve as valid reference materials for research and administration. Nevertheless, they easily overlook informal self-guided learning, independent academic reflection, and various improvement-oriented efforts teachers carry out outside official institutional arrangements.

Analysed through the PAITE lens, low participation rates in formal professional-development programmes should not be simplistically attributed to insufficient personal motivation. It may equally result from overwhelming workload burdens, resource shortages, or limited access to institutional decision-making channels. Confronted with such restrictions, quite a few teachers turn to private, less-visible learning pathways to sustain their professional competence.

Two practical suggestions arise from the above analysis. First, school administrators ought to review existing administrative workflows and organisational cultures, checking whether implicit barriers block legitimate teacher-development activities. Second, policy designers for teacher training should treat teachers as active stakeholders capable of stating their own learning demands, instead of regarding them merely as passive recipients of standardised pre-packaged training courses.

It should be stressed that constrained professional development originates from theoretical reasoning within this paper. We cannot treat it as a universal phenomenon existing across every educational setting. Its real-world prevalence, root institutional triggers, and downstream impacts still demand targeted empirical investigations in diverse research contexts.

5.3 Reconsidering Professional Identity and Professional Dignity

PAITE also invites deeper reflection on the interconnections among professional identity, institutional acknowledgement, and professional dignity. Teachers' professional self-concept does not take shape in isolation. It evolves from ongoing interactions among personal value systems, on-site work experiences, interpersonal relationships inside organisations, and broad-scale societal expectations for

the teaching workforce. Pure motivational appeals, on their own, cannot bring about substantial shifts in how teachers view their own professional roles.

Within the PAITE system, Dimension A (Agency and Professional Identity Reconstruction) captures how educators negotiate their professional status, adjust role perceptions, and form judgements about how much legitimate influence they possess within their organisations. Analytically speaking, this interpretative dimension is separate from Dimension I (Internal Agency Activation). The latter focuses on the mobilisation of practical professional capacities for concrete action, rather than the subjective meaning-making process around professional roles.

Professional identity reconstruction cannot happen merely through inner psychological adjustment. External institutional signals exert continuous shaping effects. When institutional arrangements fail to recognise teachers' expertise and contributions, teachers may form narrow, self-limiting understandings of their professional roles. Under such circumstances, even highly capable educators may hold back from bringing their full professional judgement into daily instructional practice.

Institutional recognition, accordingly, serves as one critical external driver for healthy professional-identity formation. Respect for professional dignity is not a vague moral requirement. It translates into concrete institutional choices: reasonable workload arrangements, guaranteed room for pedagogical autonomy, and genuine participation in school-related deliberations. Without these tangible supports, calls for teachers to reshape their professional self-understanding will remain largely rhetorical.

Taken together, this section argues that professional identity and professional dignity are jointly shaped by individual cognition and institutional contexts. Any discussion of teacher agency must avoid separating subjective role perception from the material conditions provided by educational systems.

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

6.1 Conceptual and Methodological Limitations

Despite the integrated theoretical perspective that PAITE brings to institutional enabling mechanisms and teacher agentic capacity, several inherent constraints within the present study deserve explicit discussion.

First and foremost, PAITE is built through conceptual reasoning grounded in existing published literature, without grounding from original empirical data. Every hypothesized association among its five dimensions remains theoretical conjecture. We cannot yet confirm its explanatory strength, practical operability or adaptability across varied educational contexts. The magnitude of inter-dimension connections still awaits real-world field investigation.

Second, the construct of internal agency activation requires further theoretical refinement before it can be turned into measurable indicators. Far more than a simple psychological attribute, it blends multiple intertwined elements: inner professional drive, role identity, subjective perception of autonomy, reflective judgement and observable agent-driven practice. The weight carried by each sub-element

may shift noticeably across different institutional settings and distinct career phases for individual teachers.

Third, four components constituting external institutional empowerment inevitably overlap under real-world school circumstances. Policy-level protection, onsite organisational support, resource supply and public professional respect can be separated for analytical discussion, yet they are tightly intertwined within actual governance systems. Any future measurement instrument must preserve their conceptual boundaries while acknowledging their practical interdependency.

Fourth, heightened teacher agency does not automatically generate positive educational outcomes. Its practical effects hinge on available material inputs, teachers' own professional proficiency, sound pedagogical decision-making and surrounding institutional constraints. When assessing agent-oriented behaviours, evaluators must anchor judgements against educational missions, professional ethical codes and the genuine needs of student groups, rather than treating greater agency as an intrinsically desirable outcome.

Lastly, interpretations regarding professional autonomy, occupational recognition and workplace dignity differ substantially under diverse sociocultural and educational systems. PAITE functions as a context-aware analytical tool, instead of a universal institutional template ready for direct transplantation. Local adjustment will always be necessary when applying this framework to unfamiliar research sites.

6.2 Directions for Future Empirical Research

Follow-up empirical work can adopt mixed methodological strategies to advance PAITE-related inquiry, centering on construct operationalisation, empirical validation and contextual adaptability.

To begin with, dedicated measurement instruments ought to be developed targeting its five core dimensions: proactive institutional empowerment, professional identity reconstruction, internal agency activation, transformative educational practice, and educational excellence alongside professional recognition. Candidate indicators may cover institutional protective rules, organisational supporting conditions, perceived professional legitimacy, self-sponsored learning behaviours, instructional flexibility and tangible school quality metrics. Expert consultation, pilot testing and psychometric calibration are indispensable steps. Researchers also need to draw clear distinctions between individual-level subjective experience and structural conditions operating at school or administrative-system levels.

Qualitative research approaches offer another viable route. In-depth semi-structured interviews with teachers, classroom observation records and archival analysis of institutional documents can reveal how educators make sense of institutional supports and convert available resources into daily work practice. Special attention should focus on how administrative requirements, resource shortages and governance structures either facilitate or hinder teachers' professional growth. Such research can also examine whether "concealed professional development" constitutes a recurring organisational

phenomenon, alongside identifying concrete pathways that bring such conditions into daily school routines.

Longitudinal study designs will deliver additional analytical value. Tracking institutional reform trajectories alongside shifts in teachers' professional self-perception, learning patterns and instructional performance over extended time windows helps researchers judge whether institutional enabling measures can produce durable improvements in teacher agency and schooling quality. Such designs also make it possible to capture dynamic shifts of endogenous agency across teachers' whole career trajectories.

Cross-regional comparative research likewise merits consideration. Comparisons across varied governance regimes help scholars separate transferable theoretical claims from context-bound relationships shaped heavily by local circumstances. Such efforts can enhance PAITE's comparative analytical utility, without presuming identical institutional arrangements will yield equivalent results everywhere.

Finally, multilevel mixed-method designs can untangle complicated links between individual teacher experience, school-level organisational context and regional governance frameworks. Multilevel statistical modelling can assess the explanatory power of PAITE as well as interaction effects among different framework components. Combining quantitative statistical outputs with qualitative field evidence further clarifies how macro-level institutional policies translate into onsite organisational routines and individual teachers' lived professional realities.

6.3 Concluding Remarks and Theoretical Implications

This paper addresses one core puzzle within educational governance scholarship: how institutional accountability and teacher-led professional agency can work in tandem to sustain high-quality basic education. Arguments laid out in this text suggest quality improvement cannot excessively rely on individual teachers' devotion, technical competence or willingness to try new pedagogical approaches. What teachers are capable of accomplishing is persistently shaped by the institutional environments where they carry out teaching duties.

Responding to this puzzle, this article establishes a three-tier theoretical architecture: an overarching reciprocal interaction mechanism, a four-dimensional model for external institutional enabling support, plus a developmental model describing teachers' endogenous agency. These theoretical building blocks converge into the PAITE framework, which unites institutional enabling conditions, professional identity reshaping, internal agency mobilisation, transformative practice and professional recognition under one coherent analytical structure.

The key theoretical contribution brought by PAITE lies in re-conceptualising educational progress as a two-way interactive process shared by institutions and teaching practitioners. Institutional enabling settings create prerequisites for teachers to develop and exercise agentic capacity. Teachers then convert these contextual opportunities into pedagogical innovation and real-world classroom practice. Accumulated practical experience generates feedback evidence to drive organisational learning and

governance optimisation. Educational quality, therefore, is never merely the aggregate outcome of separate individual teacher performances. It emerges from ongoing interactions between institutional obligations and active professional participation.

Such analytical reorientation shifts research focus away from isolated assessment of teacher performance, and turns attention toward relational and structural prerequisites that sustain teacher growth and educational improvement. PAITE furnishes theoretical foundations for understanding how institutional support and teacher agency jointly underpin long-term high-quality basic education. It meanwhile opens room for subsequent empirical testing and theoretical refinement by other researchers in this field.

This study also puts forward an institution-grounded interpretation of professional recognition. Meaningful recognition moves far beyond giving rewards for individual sacrifice or personal dedication. It includes safeguarding professional dignity, respecting pedagogical expertise, and building tangible opportunities for participatory engagement, professional autonomy and lifelong career development. The normative vision of "professional glory" from the original Chinese manuscript obtains its analytical expression through the notions of professional recognition and professional dignity. This wording choice avoids romanticising teachers' self-sacrifice; it rejects the implicit assumption that professional commitment should require unconditional acceptance of unreasonable institutional pressure. Instead, it highlights clear-cut responsibilities resting with education administrations and governance systems to acknowledge and safeguard teachers' professional contributions.

From a governance standpoint, PAITE signals a necessary shift from performance-oriented evaluation logic toward continuous institutional enablement. Policy safeguards, organisational climate, social esteem and material resource inputs need to function as an integrated whole. Collectively, they build workplace environments where teachers can deliver well-reasoned professional judgements, respond to diverse student needs, and genuinely take part in curriculum design and school-level quality-improvement initiatives. Teachers ought not to be treated purely as executors of pre-formulated reform plans; they deserve status as professional contributors who join the design, interpretation, implementation and iterative revision of educational reforms. This transition requires governance systems to reduce over-dependence on individual accountability as the primary tool for lifting teaching quality. A more balanced perspective must acknowledge both institutional duties and the professional responsibilities borne by educators themselves.

Even so, conceptual relationships, measurable indicators and cross-context applicability associated with PAITE still demand empirical validation. What this paper offers is theoretical groundwork for further academic discussion and empirical examination, rather than universal explanatory validity. This framework acts both as an analytical proposition and a starting point for scholarly dialogue about what institutional conditions can support durable teacher development and better schooling outcomes.

Sustainable educational advancement should never force teachers to fill institutional gaps through personal self-sacrifice. Instead, it ought to grow out of institutional contexts where professional initiative receives solid backing, pedagogical expertise wins genuine respect, developmental opportunities stay accessible, and teachers' practical contributions gain proper acknowledgement. This calls for reciprocal understandings: institutions must build environments allowing teachers to thrive professionally; teachers should be granted meaningful space to push forward improvements in educational practice; progress in educational quality should in turn strengthen those institutions that sustain the teaching profession.

This reciprocal principle constitutes the theoretical core of PAITE. It delivers one feasible conceptual direction for constructing basic-education systems that prove sustainable, equitable and consistently high-performing.

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