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# Fostering Transformational Instructional Leadership vis-à-vis Recalibrated Hamline Plan through Assimilated Habermasian Public Spheres



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## ABSTRACT

Instructional leaders' mental model of leadership and its implementation are of such importance in augmenting the quality of the teaching and learning process. Assessing and monitoring teacher development are embedded in their practices. Yet, less is proposed on resolving the usually passive role of teachers in their performance assessment using common standards that can limit consultative skills of both parties. Hence, the current study aims to contextualize the Hamline Plan originally used in teaching the liberal arts with integrated Habermasian Public Spheres to exemplify discursive action between teachers and instructional leaders in the assessment process using an autoethnographic research design. The study merged the concepts of the Hamline Plan and Public Spheres by Habermas in the context of instructional leadership capitalizing from the personal observation and experiences of the author as a teacher and as an instructional leader aiming to ameliorate the involvement of teachers in the teaching performance assessment. Thus, this proposed solution is recommended to be rolled out and to undergo cycles of implementation to possibly promote transformational instructional leadership in the country.

## Keywords:

*Mentoring, Modeling, Monitoring, Teacher Assessment, Transformational Leadership*

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational leaders are critical to the success of any school system. They are assigned to create a school environment that allows teachers to provide quality instruction to students, also known as instructional leadership (Lochmiller & Cunningham, 2019). This leadership is driven by the school leaders' mental model and strategies of leadership that drive their practice (Zuckerman & O'Shea, 2020). Scholars, on the other hand, criticize this type of leadership, particularly because it promotes universality in governing educational institutions. Lochmiller and Cunningham (2019) propose an "explicit rethinking" of the relationship between conceptualizations of leadership practice and content area knowledge, and they advocate for content-specific leadership. Moreso, leaders should have relevant "knowledge and consultative skills" regarding specific grade levels and subject areas to provide valid feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Following Hitt and Tucker (2015), "The importance of school leaders and their daily practices in creating generative learning environments for teachers and students is receiving increased attention from policymakers and a host of entities committed to the improvement of K–12 education." They also perceived instructional leadership as lacking and proposed the concepts of shared, transformational, and integrated instructional leadership. The purpose of shared instructional leadership is for teachers and administrators to collaborate on school demands for teachers. It morphed into transformational leadership, which emphasizes an organization's dedication to a common objective and the greater good. The ideal type, according to the same authors, is integrated instructional leadership, which is a blend of shared and transformative leadership, with the former being required for the latter. This is backed by their research, which demonstrated, among other things, schools that adopt integrated leadership had superior educational quality. Nonetheless, the authors emphasize the importance of interactive decision-making in instructional planning across disciplines.

Further, the spread of COVID-19 to many parts of the world has prompted the World Health Organization to proclaim a global pandemic for 2020. As a result, the educational community has been disrupted. As a result,

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academic institutions have transitioned from a physical configuration to what we now refer to as the new normal setup. Institutions must recalibrate pre-pandemic approaches in supporting and measuring learning, such as technological integration, adjusting educational conceptions, and investigating adaptable modalities, tools, and tactics for the new setup, during this transition. It is a sad reality that most new and experienced teachers have doubts about their ability to meet the demands of teaching in an online setting. These demands include but are not limited to, using the various online platforms in teaching, and writing self-sufficient modules for offline learners. It is evident, then, that performative expectations, such as assessment, curricular enactment, and teaching practice, are increasingly influencing teachers' work and learning (Hardy, 2017). Hence, it is in this time of the academic demand to propose a recalibration of the instructional leadership and capitalize on its transformational facet. The current study proposed an action to solve this need through a contextualized Hamline Plan - Monitoring, Modeling, and Mentoring (Davenport, 2004) empowered by assimilating Habermas' concept of public spheres (1970). To fill in this gap, the proposed solution in this study is anchored to two theoretical underpinnings namely, the Hamline Plan (Davenport, 2004) and the public spheres of Habermas in 1964.

The Hamline Plan is a linear process that was originally formulated for the practical liberal arts, particularly writing for higher education, to redirect from professing information as a mode of teaching originally formulated for the practical liberal arts, particularly writing for higher education, to redirect from professing information as a mode of teaching (Davenport, 2004). Instead, it starts with mentoring the learners on their discovery process, then, modeling what is expected from them in the learning process. Afterward, the assessment and evaluation of the learning outcomes are in the monitoring phase.

On the other hand, the concept of the public sphere proposed by critical theorist Jürgen Habermas in 1964 can aid in defining standards for such an interactive recalibrated instructional leadership. The public sphere is the social realm in which individuals communicate views as equal agents practicing communicative rationality (Tilak & Glassman, 2020). In such a sphere, moderated discourse creates

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an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1970). Late-modern cultures are defined by mutual differences and the ability to define or modify views, values, and aspects of identity more than ever before (Alisch & Ritter, 2021). Habermas' notion of the public sphere is supplemented with the idea of communicative actions in it for all people to deliberate unreservedly for better understanding and attaining a common goal (Hardy, 2017). This concept has been incorporated in school settings wherein teachers comprise the important segment of multiple public spheres which empower members to affect decision-makers in all levels (Reid and Thomson, 2003). However, less is known on public spheres of teachers' practice (Hardy, 2017) not to mention the need to involve the teachers in school protocols, policies, and practices that enable them to exercise their discursive rights to participation (Martin, 2016).

Being such a promising plan, the Hamline Plan is limited to testing in the teaching and learning process and not on promoting leadership practice that highlights quality instruction vis-à-vis professional and personal development among teachers. Hence, integrating the Habermasian notion of the public sphere to practice communicative action in the latter's setup is anticipated to further boost such contextualization to leadership practices. Throughout the contextualized Hamline Plan (Davenport, 2004) in the previous section, this sphere offers the opportunity for the leaders to put forward an open platform for a discourse of the means to attain the common goal interactively and openly with involved teachers. In contrast to the traditional top-down strategy, such integration of the public spheres in an instructional leadership setting encourages participatory leadership and management dynamics. In the absence of a venue to indicate the instructors' voices on top of the one-size-fits-all set of criteria, this emphasizes the necessity to depart from the cliché description of a standard assessment for teachers treating it as a norm in the academe. It is further supported by Martin (2016) underscoring that such norms must be evaluated against real-life participants with a variety of opinions who all respect the rights of others to participate. Hence, it is the goal of the study to contextualize the Hamline Plan as a cycle instead of a linear process in the teacher performance assessment while assimilating Habermasian public spheres in each phase. Consequently, it is

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expected that the quality of instructional leadership can trigger ripple effects on various facets of teaching and learning processes.

### **Objectives of the study**

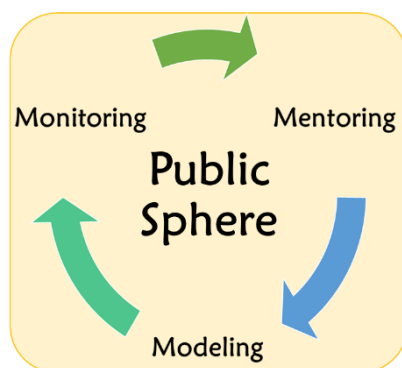
To fill in the research gaps mentioned, it is the general role of the current study to ameliorate the role of teachers in their performance assessment through transformational leadership. Specifically, it intends to (1) contextualize the Hamline plan to leadership context in a cyclical manner; (2) integrate Habermas' public sphere in each phase of the contextualized Hamline plan; and (3) propose a model that augments the usually passive role of teachers in their performance assessment fostering transformation instructional leadership.

### **Methodology**

This study follows an autoethnographic research design highlighting its nature as an observational and reflexive research method (Paulos, 2021). In contrast to the common notion of data-driven research, this design maximizes the author's subjective nature and reflexive examination as ethnographic data (Bochner and Ellis, 2016). In the context of the study, the researcher merged the concepts of the Hamline Plan and Public Spheres by Habermas in the context of instructional leadership. The results of the study emerged from the personal observation and experiences of the author as a teacher and as an instructional leader aiming to ameliorate the involvement of teachers in the teaching performance assessment.

### **Results and Discussions**

To provide the context, the study focuses on how the proposed solution can be used in the teacher performance assessment in the academe. From the linear process of the Hamline Plan, the researcher recalibrates it into a cycle of mentoring, modeling, and monitoring wherein the public sphere is maximized in each phase. This section focuses on how the recalibrated Hamline Plan with assimilated Habermasian public spheres (see Figure 1). This underscores the importance of the teacher and the leader evaluator to be of the same field to promote a more open venue to practice discursive rights to participation among them. Lastly, this contextualization treated the 3Ms as a cycle in the assessment process instead of a linear model to promote the sustainability of the proposal.



*Figure 1. The cyclical process of the Hamline Plan through assimilated Habermasian public sphere.*

For any assessment process, it is imperative to set the assessment goals before any administration of such. Yet, the dynamic needs of students call for adaptive and responsive changes in teaching practices with heightened accountability despite challenging environments (Keiler et al., 2020). These expectations are translated to standard assessment tools to assure all teachers are on the same page with any change that may take place. It is unfortunate but amenable that not all educators can catch up to these changes be it in curricular, professional, pedagogical reforms, and the like. Nevertheless, there is a need for an instructional leader to mentor teachers and cascade these expected outcomes. This can add even more pressure for teachers to engender their practices and meet these uniform expectations for all.

To promote deliberative actions through the public sphere, instructional leaders can present these expectations to the teachers interactively during the mentoring phase. Instead of hardly putting down the expected outcomes, teachers can express their apprehensions and justify such to ensure that all rights are considered yet no goal is compromised. In parts where expectations do not meet with the justified apprehensions, transformational leaders can step up and mentor them which can be focused on shedding light on what seems to be unclear or meeting halfway to have a win-win situation. This might be a smooth plan at first but in the spiral curriculum of science at the secondary level, for instance, debate among teachers and instructional leader arises on standardizing everything

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for every quarter in which teachers need to change their approach for every field making it more fragmented. This mentoring phase is where the instructional leader needs to offer solutions to such diverging feedback and deliberately arrive at a draft of the modified assessment tool.

This leads to the modeling phase of the Hamline Plan. It is worthy to note that after hearing the voices of all participants in the public sphere during the mentoring phase, the set expectations and deliberated solutions are just theoretical and not yet put into practice. Thus, in the context of transformational instructional leadership, it is expected from a department chair to be a person who is at least credible enough to lead a community of educators through example. By displaying dedication, leading by example creates a significant precedent (Boiral et al., 2015). This is a similar thought exemplified in the article of Davenport (2004). It is an unequal playing field for teachers to be headed by someone who has never worked in the field they are all in. For instance, module authoring and online teaching are now expected of academic frontliners in the new normal. Teachers must understand what is expected of them by seeing the development process and the ultimate product they will produce through their chairs. In an online environment, the same is true for content delivery. Apparently, a chair has no right to evaluate any of the written modules and online delivery of the educators if they were not able to experience doing them on their own.

In contextualizing the modeling phase, a public sphere where teachers initiate the feedbacking is expected. It is of this part where the teachers air out to the instructional leaders their observations and concerns such as but not limited to things that (a) can still be improved in the set of criteria set for them; (b) are applicable and not applicable in their field, and (c) can and cannot be contextualized in their field. This assimilation of the public sphere highlights the importance of deliberating the expectations through pilot testing before any assessment of the teachers' performance.

Consequently, the end goal of the previous phase is to arrive at an initially deliberated assessment material for any teacher task. To check it in the actual implementation, monitoring shall follow. It is expected from the teachers to put the deliberated content of the tool into action while the

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instructional leaders monitor the outcomes. The assumption is for the teachers to meet all key indicators of its attainment yet, there is no absolute implementation in reality. Hence, the assimilation of the public sphere comes in through the post-conference. This shall offer a venue for all participants to discuss the observations and implementation of such teacher experience. For instance, leaders can formalize the points not met while teachers can provide the reasons for such. Discursive actions, at this juncture, can trigger possible modifications of the tool, hence, starting the cycle again of the contextualized Hamline Plan.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The proposed recalibrated Hamline Plan through assimilated Habermasian public spheres outlined in this study offers a propitious solution to a vested concern upending teachers in terms of transformational instructional leadership. It offers to contribute to putting into practice a vision for a transformational leader who *"...goes beyond the traditional mode of direct control, reward, and punishment to delivering changes in the organization through motivation and inspiration"* (Zhang & Tan, 2021). A platform for teachers and instructional leaders to have discursive action in and deliberate on participants' needs and expectations is underlined in this model. This addresses the gap of the usually passive role of teachers in their performance assessment using common standards that can limit consultative skills of both parties. Thus, being an instrumental solution, it is recommended for this proposal to be rolled out and to undergo cycles of implementation to possibly promote transformational instructional leadership in the country.



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## Author’s Profile



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