



Applying the Principles of Sāraṇīya-Dhamma to Educational Administration:

A Conceptual Review

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Educational administration increasingly demands ethical frameworks that go beyond procedural compliance to address relational, cultural, and moral dimensions of leadership. While Western theories such as ethical leadership and transformational leadership have dominated this discourse, non-Western philosophical traditions remain largely absent from mainstream administrative scholarship. This article presents a conceptual review that systematically integrates Sāraṇīya-Dhamma six Buddhist principles of harmonious coexistence drawn from the Aṅguttara Nikāya with contemporary ethical and transformational leadership theories to construct a cross-cultural normative framework for educational administration.

The review employs a narrative-conceptual synthesis methodology, drawing on Buddhist canonical texts, peer-reviewed leadership literature, and organizational ethics scholarship. Each of the six principles loving-kindness in action, speech, and thought; fair sharing of resources; shared moral discipline; and shared right view is analytically mapped onto established dimensions of ethical leadership, identifying both areas of convergence and points of philosophical tension. The analysis reveals that Sāraṇīya-Dhamma offers a distinctive contribution through its emphasis on *moral intentionality* the ethical quality of inner motivation which fills a gap in Western leadership theories that tend to privilege observable behavior and measurable outcomes over the inner ethical orientation of the leader.

This study contributes a theoretically grounded, cross-cultural model that repositions relational harmony and moral intentionality as central not peripheral to effective educational administration. The framework provides a basis for future empirical research and informs leadership development programs operating in culturally diverse educational environments.

Keywords: educational administration; Sāraṇīya-Dhamma; Buddhist ethics; ethical leadership; cross-cultural leadership; moral intentionality



Section 1: Introduction

Educational administration plays an important role in shaping the quality, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of schools and educational institutions. Beyond managing systems and ensuring efficiency, today's educational leaders are expected to navigate ethical complexity, sustain healthy relationships, and build environments where people can cooperate meaningfully across differences in values, backgrounds, and cultural expectations. These demands have intensified under conditions of globalization, educational reform, and rising accountability, where leadership decisions carry significant ethical and social consequences (Northouse, 2022).

In response, research in educational leadership has increasingly turned toward ethical, values-based, and relationship-oriented frameworks. Western theories particularly ethical leadership, servant leadership, and transformational leadership have made substantial contributions by emphasizing honesty, fairness, moral responsibility, and care for others as foundations of effective leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Northouse, 2022). These frameworks have advanced the field considerably, yet they carry a significant limitation: they are grounded in Western intellectual traditions that tend to privilege individual moral agency, personal integrity, and dyadic leader-follower relationships as the primary units of ethical analysis (Hofstede, 2001; House et al., 2004).

This individualistic orientation creates conceptual friction when applied to educational contexts shaped by collective values, communal responsibility, and relational harmony contexts that are common across much of Asia, Southeast Asia, and other non-Western societies. In these settings, ethical leadership is often understood not as the moral conduct of an individual leader but as a shared condition that emerges from the quality of relationships within the entire community. Western frameworks, however well-developed, do not fully account for this relational and collective dimension of ethics, leaving a meaningful gap in the theoretical foundations available to educational administrators working in these contexts (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; Walker & Dimmock, 2002).

Buddhist philosophy offers a substantive alternative that has not yet been adequately explored in educational leadership scholarship. Grounded in principles of moral conduct, compassion, and collective well-being, Buddhism presents an ethical system that is fundamentally relational one in which individual virtue is inseparable from the quality of relationships and the harmony of the community as a whole. Within this tradition, *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma a set of six principles found in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* offers a particularly relevant framework for organizational life (Bodhi, 2012). The term *sāraṇīya* refers to qualities that help people live together peacefully, while *dhamma* refers to moral truth or ethical principle.



Together, they form a practical guide for harmonious coexistence that extends naturally into organizational and administrative contexts.

The choice of *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma is not arbitrary. Unlike broader Buddhist ethical concepts such as the Noble Eightfold Path, which addresses individual liberation, *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma is specifically concerned with the ethics of living and working together with how people in a shared community coordinate their actions, speech, intentions, resources, and values toward collective well-being. This makes it structurally more comparable to organizational leadership theories and more directly applicable to the relational demands of educational administration.

Despite this relevance, *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma remains largely absent from international educational leadership research. The limited scholarship that engages Buddhist ethics in education tends to focus on moral development at the individual or classroom level, rather than on organizational leadership or administrative systems. Furthermore, existing work rarely moves beyond description to engage critically with mainstream leadership theory (Northouse, 2022). This absence represents both a theoretical gap and a practical limitation, particularly as educational systems worldwide become more culturally diverse and administratively complex.

Conceptual review studies are well-suited to addressing this kind of gap. Rather than generating new empirical data, they bring together existing knowledge from disparate fields, identify theoretical connections and tensions, and construct integrated frameworks that advance scholarly understanding (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Grant & Booth, 2009). In educational administration research, this approach is especially valuable for introducing philosophical and cross-cultural perspectives into established leadership discourse.

This article therefore aims to examine *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma through a conceptual review and analyze how it can be meaningfully and critically integrated with contemporary theories of ethical and transformational leadership in educational administration. The study seeks not only to identify where these traditions converge, but also to explore where they diverge and what those divergences reveal about the assumptions embedded in current leadership frameworks. By doing so, it contributes to the development of a more inclusive, culturally grounded, and ethically comprehensive understanding of educational leadership.

Section 2: Methodology of the Review

2.1 Review Design

This study adopts a narrative-conceptual review approach to systematically analyze and synthesize literature related to *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma and educational administration. Rather than collecting new empirical data, the goal is to construct a theoretically integrated



framework by bringing Buddhist ethical teachings into critical dialogue with contemporary theories of educational leadership and organizational ethics. This design is appropriate for studies that seek to establish new theoretical connections across disciplines, particularly when the conceptual terrain is underexplored and empirical investigation requires prior framework development (Baumeister & Leary, 1997; Grant & Booth, 2009).

The review follows a two-track structure. The first track focuses on Buddhist canonical and philosophical literature, with particular attention to primary texts and authoritative scholarly translations related to *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*. The second track engages contemporary scholarship in educational administration, ethical leadership, transformational leadership, and cross-cultural organizational ethics. The analytical work of the review lies in mapping, comparing, and critically synthesizing these two bodies of literature to identify both convergences and philosophical tensions.

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

Literature was retrieved through systematic searches of the following academic databases: ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. For Buddhist philosophical sources, additional searches were conducted through the Pali Text Society digital archives and the Access to Insight repository, which provide authenticated canonical texts and peer-reviewed translations.

The following keyword sets were used across both tracks:

For Buddhist literature: *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*, *Buddhist ethics*, *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *Buddhist organizational ethics*, *Buddhist leadership*, *Pali canon ethics*, *harmony Buddhist philosophy*

For leadership and administration literature: *ethical leadership*, *transformational leadership*, *educational administration ethics*, *values-based leadership*, *cross-cultural leadership*, *organizational harmony*, *relational leadership*, *non-Western leadership theory*

Combined searches used terms such as: *Buddhist ethics AND educational leadership*, *Eastern philosophy AND organizational ethics*, *cross-cultural ethics AND school administration*

No strict chronological boundary was applied to Buddhist canonical sources, as these texts are foundational and timeless in nature. For contemporary leadership and educational administration literature, searches were focused on publications from 2000 to 2024, with particular emphasis on high-impact studies published within the last five years to ensure currency and relevance.

2.3 Selection Criteria

Sources were included based on the following explicit criteria. For Buddhist literature, a source was included if it was either a primary canonical text in authenticated translation, a peer-reviewed philosophical analysis of *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* or related Buddhist ethical principles, or a comparative religious study engaging Buddhist ethics in organizational or social



contexts. Textual authenticity for canonical sources was verified by cross-referencing translations against the Pali Text Society standard editions and consulting multiple scholarly commentaries to confirm interpretive consistency (Bodhi, 2012; Harvey, 2013; Keown, 2016).

For contemporary leadership and administration literature, sources were included if they were published in peer-reviewed journals or by recognized academic publishers, if they engaged directly with ethical, relational, or values-based dimensions of leadership, and if they offered theoretical or empirical content relevant to educational administration or organizational ethics. Priority was given to sources that demonstrated cross-cultural applicability or explicitly engaged with non-Western perspectives on leadership.

Sources were excluded if they were purely anecdotal, lacked peer review, offered no theoretical grounding, or were limited to personal or practitioner accounts without scholarly engagement. Popular management texts and non-academic Buddhist self-help literature were also excluded.

2.4 Analytical Procedure

The analysis followed a four-stage conceptual synthesis process adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) and Torraco (2005).

In the first stage, close reading and annotation, all selected sources were read carefully and annotated for key concepts, theoretical claims, and ethical principles. Canonical Buddhist texts were read in conjunction with scholarly commentaries to ensure that interpretations were philosophically grounded rather than superficially applied.

In the second stage, concept extraction and mapping, the six principles of *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* were extracted and defined according to their canonical meanings. In parallel, core constructs from ethical leadership theory, transformational leadership, and cross-cultural organizational ethics were identified and defined. Each Buddhist principle was then mapped onto corresponding or related constructs in contemporary leadership theory to identify structural parallels and conceptual overlaps.

In the third stage, critical comparison and tension analysis, the mapped concepts were examined not only for compatibility but also for philosophical divergence. This stage explicitly asked where the assumptions underlying *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* such as the primacy of collective harmony and moral intentionality differ from the assumptions underlying Western leadership models, and what those differences mean for educational administration practice.

In the fourth stage, synthetic framework construction, the findings from the comparison were integrated into a unified conceptual model. This model identifies *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* as a foundational ethical layer that operates alongside and enriches existing leadership theories, rather than simply replacing them.



2.5 Trustworthiness and Academic Rigor

To ensure trustworthiness, several measures were adopted. Key Buddhist concepts were cross-checked across multiple authoritative translations and scholarly commentaries to minimize interpretive bias (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Leadership constructs were defined in accordance with their usage in high-impact, peer-reviewed sources to ensure theoretical fidelity. The analytical procedure was made explicit and stepwise to allow readers to evaluate the reasoning process transparently. Where interpretive judgments were made particularly in comparing philosophical traditions with different ontological foundations these judgments are acknowledged and justified within the discussion.

All references and citations follow APA 7th edition standards to maintain consistency and academic integrity throughout.

Section 3: Conceptual / Theoretical Framework (Revised)

3.1 *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* as a Normative Ethical Foundation

Sāraṇīya-Dhamma refers to six ethical principles found in the Aṅguttara Nikāya of the Pali canon, specifically taught by the Buddha to the Vajjian community as conditions for social cohesion and non-decline (Bodhi, 2012). The term *Sāraṇīya* derives from the Pali root meaning "to be remembered" or "that which promotes concord," while *dhamma* denotes moral truth or righteous principle. Together, they describe not a list of rules but a set of relational dispositions ways of orienting oneself toward others that collectively generate the conditions for harmonious communal life.

This is a critical philosophical distinction. Unlike rule-based or compliance-oriented ethical systems, *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* is dispositional and relational in character. Ethical conduct is not measured by adherence to external standards alone but by the quality of intention, action, and relationship that a person cultivates within a shared community. This ontological foundation that ethics is inherently social and emerges from the texture of relationships rather than from individual rule-following represents a fundamental departure from the individualistic premises that underlie most Western leadership ethics (Keown, 2016; Harvey, 2013).

The six principles, examined below with their full philosophical depth, form the normative core of this study's framework.

1. *Mettā-kāya-kamma* Loving-kindness in bodily action

At its canonical level, this principle refers to the cultivation of *mettā* a Pali term often translated as loving-kindness or benevolence as expressed through physical conduct toward others (Bodhi, 2012). *Mettā* is not merely politeness or professional courtesy; it is an active, unconditional orientation of goodwill that seeks the genuine well-being of others regardless



of personal gain. In an organizational context, this translates into leadership behavior that is consistently supportive, non-harmful, and oriented toward the flourishing of all members not only those in positions of influence or high performance.

The philosophical depth here lies in the word *unconditional*. Western ethical leadership emphasizes fair treatment and respectful conduct, but these are typically understood as normative obligations contingent on professional roles and institutional expectations (Brown & Treviño, 2006). *Mettā-kāya-kamma* asks for something more demanding: a disposition of genuine care that is not conditional on reciprocity, performance, or institutional hierarchy.

2. *Mettā-vacī-kamma* Loving-kindness in speech

This principle concerns the ethical quality of communication not only its content but its underlying intention. In Buddhist ethics, speech is governed by five standards: it must be timely, truthful, gentle, beneficial, and spoken with a mind of goodwill (Bodhi, 2012). This is a significantly more demanding standard than the truthfulness and transparency emphasized in ethical leadership theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006), because it requires that communication be evaluated not only for accuracy but for the relational and emotional quality it produces in the listener.

For educational administrators, this principle reframes communication from an instrumental tool for conveying information or directives into an ethical practice in itself one in which how something is said, and with what inner orientation, matters as much as what is said.

3. *Mettā-mano-kamma* Loving-kindness in thought

This principle addresses the ethical dimension of mental life the intentions, attitudes, and dispositions that leaders cultivate privately, prior to any observable action. In Buddhist philosophy, *cetanā* (intention or volition) is understood as the moral root of all action; the ethical quality of an act is determined primarily by the intention from which it arises (Harvey, 2013). This is a profound philosophical claim with direct implications for leadership: it means that two administrators performing identical actions may be acting very differently from an ethical standpoint, depending on their inner orientation.

This principle intersects with, but also challenges, Western leadership theory. Ethical leadership theory acknowledges the role of internal moral motivation (Brown & Treviño, 2006), and authentic leadership theory similarly emphasizes self-awareness and internalized moral standards (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). However, these frameworks still tend to evaluate leaders primarily through behavioral outcomes and follower perceptions. *Mettā-mano-kamma* insists that cultivating ethical thought is not merely a precondition for good behavior but is itself a



moral practice one that requires ongoing effort, self-examination, and discipline independent of any external accountability system.

4. *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* Fair sharing of resources

This principle refers to the equitable distribution of both material and non-material goods within a community, including not only physical resources but knowledge, opportunity, recognition, and institutional support (Bodhi, 2012). The philosophical foundation is one of *non-attachment* and *generosity (dāna)* the understanding that resources held by individuals within a community are more properly understood as held in trust for the collective good. This represents a substantive philosophical divergence from Western organizational ethics, which typically frames resource distribution in terms of procedural fairness equal application of rules and criteria (Rawls, 1971, as cited in Northouse, 2022). *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* goes further by suggesting that fairness is not merely procedural but attitudinal: the ethical administrator does not simply follow distribution rules but cultivates an inner disposition of generosity and non-possessiveness toward institutional resources and authority.

5. *Sīla-sāmaññatā* Shared moral discipline

This principle refers to the maintenance of shared ethical standards and behavioral norms across a community what might be described in contemporary terms as collective moral accountability (Keown, 2016). However, the Buddhist understanding of *sīla* (moral discipline) differs importantly from Western notions of compliance or professional codes of conduct. *Sīla* is not externally imposed; it is voluntarily cultivated as an expression of one's commitment to the well-being of the community. Ethical behavior is maintained not primarily through surveillance or sanction but through shared moral aspiration and mutual encouragement.

This creates a meaningful tension with modern educational administration, which operates within frameworks of external accountability, performance management, and statutory regulation. An administrator who applies *Sīla-sāmaññatā* must navigate the gap between internally motivated ethical conduct and externally mandated compliance systems a tension that the framework must explicitly acknowledge rather than ignore.

6. *Diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā* Shared right view

This principle refers to the cultivation of a shared ethical vision and collective moral understanding within a community (Bodhi, 2012). *Diṭṭhi* in Buddhist philosophy means "view" or "understanding," and *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view) is the first element of the Noble Eightfold Path the foundational cognitive orientation from which all ethical action flows. Shared right view in an organizational context means that members of an institution not only follow the same rules but genuinely share an understanding of why ethical conduct matters and what the community is collectively oriented toward.



This principle most closely parallels the concept of shared moral purpose in transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass & Riggio, 2006) and the notion of organizational culture grounded in common values (Schein, 2010). However, it differs in that it is not primarily a strategic or motivational construct it is an epistemic and ethical one. The goal is not alignment for the sake of institutional performance but a genuine convergence of moral understanding that reduces conflict and supports harmonious collective life.

3.2 Ethical Leadership Theory and Its Relationship to *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*

Ethical leadership theory defines leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and relationships, combined with the active promotion of such conduct among followers through communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2006). Its core characteristics fairness, honesty, accountability, transparency, and respect are operationalized primarily through observable behavior and follower perception, making it a behaviorally oriented framework that prioritizes external manifestations of ethical conduct.

When placed alongside *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*, two important observations emerge. First, there is genuine convergence: both frameworks treat the leader as a moral model, both emphasize fairness and respect as organizational virtues, and both connect ethical leadership to trust and institutional harmony. Second, and more significantly, there is a philosophical asymmetry. Ethical leadership theory is largely silent on the interior life of the leader on the quality of intention, the cultivation of inner dispositions, and the relational ethics that precede observable behavior. *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*, by contrast, locates the ethical foundation precisely there, in the realm of intention and inner orientation, treating behavioral conduct as the expression of a prior moral cultivation rather than as the primary site of ethical evaluation.

This asymmetry is not a contradiction but a complementarity. *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* can be understood as providing the interior ethical foundation the dispositional layer that ethical leadership theory assumes but does not fully theorize. Together, they form a more complete account of ethical leadership: one that addresses both the inner orientation of the leader and the behavioral and relational practices through which that orientation is expressed in organizational life.

Authentic leadership theory offers a partial bridge here, with its emphasis on self-awareness, internalized moral standards, and relational transparency (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). However, authentic leadership remains grounded in the concept of the individual self the authentic leader's unique identity and personal values whereas *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* is grounded in the dissolution of self-centered orientation as a precondition for genuine ethical conduct. This represents a deeper philosophical divergence that future research should examine more carefully.



3.3 Transformational Leadership, Educational Administration, and Organizational Harmony

Transformational leadership theory describes leadership that motivates followers to transcend self-interest in pursuit of collective goals, through inspiration, moral influence, and values-based vision (Burns, 1978; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Its emphasis on shared purpose, moral influence, and the elevation of followers' ethical awareness makes it the Western leadership theory most structurally compatible with *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma.

The most direct point of alignment lies between *Ditṭhi-sāmaññatā* (shared right view) and transformational leadership's concept of idealized influence and inspirational motivation both are concerned with creating a shared moral orientation that guides collective action. Similarly, *Mettā-mano-kamma* (loving-kindness in thought) resonates with transformational leadership's emphasis on individualized consideration, which calls on leaders to attend to the developmental and emotional needs of each follower (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

However, a significant tension emerges around the nature of influence itself. Transformational leadership, even in its ethical formulations, retains a fundamentally hierarchical structure: the leader transforms the followers. *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma, by contrast, envisions ethical community as a mutually constituted condition the administrator does not transform others so much as participate in the collective cultivation of shared ethical norms. This distinction has practical implications for educational administration: it suggests a model of leadership that is less directive and more participatory, less concerned with inspiring followers toward the leader's vision and more concerned with facilitating a genuinely shared moral understanding across the institution.

Research in educational administration consistently supports the value of ethical and transformational approaches for organizational harmony, trust, and institutional effectiveness (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Northouse, 2022). *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma enriches this picture by grounding organizational harmony not in strategic leadership behavior but in the ethical quality of everyday relationships a distinction that has important consequences for how leadership development and institutional culture are understood.

3.4 Integrated Conceptual Model

Based on the synthesis above, this study proposes an integrated conceptual model organized around three interconnected layers, each of which addresses a different dimension of ethical leadership in educational administration.

The first layer is the *dispositional layer*, constituted by *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma. This layer addresses the interior ethical orientation of the leader the cultivation of loving-kindness in thought, speech, and action; generosity in sharing resources; and commitment to shared moral discipline and vision. This layer provides the motivational and intentional foundation from



which all ethical leadership behavior flows. Without this layer, behavioral compliance with ethical standards remains external and fragile; with it, ethical conduct becomes an expression of genuine moral cultivation.

The second layer is the *behavioral and relational layer*, constituted by ethical leadership and authentic leadership theories. This layer addresses how the interior dispositions of the first layer are expressed through observable conduct through fair decision-making, transparent communication, moral modeling, and accountable behavior. This is the layer at which *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* becomes institutionally visible and socially effective.

The third layer is the *organizational and cultural layer*, constituted by transformational leadership theory and educational administration scholarship. This layer addresses the collective outcomes of sustained ethical leadership the development of shared moral purpose, organizational harmony, trust-based institutional culture, and conditions for collaborative and sustainable educational practice.

These three layers are not sequential but mutually reinforcing. Strong dispositional foundations strengthen behavioral integrity; consistent ethical behavior builds organizational culture; and a culture of shared moral vision reinforces and sustains the individual dispositions of leaders and members alike. Critically, the model also acknowledges points of tension at each layer: between unconditional loving-kindness and the institutional necessity of accountability and discipline; between internally motivated ethics and externally imposed compliance frameworks; and between participatory moral community and hierarchical administrative authority. These tensions are not failures of the framework but productive challenges that educational administrators must navigate thoughtfully and reflectively.

This integrated model positions *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* not as a replacement for established leadership theories but as a philosophical deepening of them one that enriches the conceptual foundations of ethical educational administration by restoring attention to the interior, relational, and collective dimensions of moral leadership.

Section 4: Analytical Discussion / Synthesis (Revised)

4.1 Convergence Between *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* and Ethical Leadership: Depth Beyond Surface Similarity

At first glance, the convergence between *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* and ethical leadership theory appears straightforward: both emphasize moral conduct, trust, and leadership by example. However, reducing this alignment to surface similarity misses the more significant theoretical contribution that emerges when the two frameworks are examined at the level of their underlying assumptions.



Ethical leadership theory holds that leaders shape organizational behavior through the ethical quality of their actions and through deliberate efforts to promote ethical conduct among followers via communication, reinforcement, and role modeling (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This is a fundamentally top-down and behaviorally oriented model: the ethical leader acts well, communicates expectations clearly, and rewards ethical behavior in others. The mechanism of ethical influence is essentially managerial it operates through the leader's visible conduct and institutional authority.

Sāraṇīya-Dhamma offers a structurally different account of how ethical culture develops within a community. Rather than locating ethical influence in the conduct of a single leader, it understands ethical community as a mutually constituted condition that emerges from the quality of relationships across the entire group (Bodhi, 2012). The administrator who applies Sāraṇīya-Dhamma is not primarily managing ethical behavior in others but participating in the collective cultivation of shared ethical norms. This shifts the locus of ethical responsibility from the individual leader to the relational fabric of the institution as a whole.

This distinction has important practical implications. An educational administrator working within an ethical leadership framework may focus on establishing clear ethical policies, modeling appropriate behavior, and enforcing accountability mechanisms. An administrator informed by Sāraṇīya-Dhamma would additionally invest in the quality of everyday relationships in how meetings are conducted, how disagreements are handled, how resources are discussed, and how decisions are made together understanding these relational practices as the primary medium through which institutional ethics is cultivated or eroded. These two orientations are not mutually exclusive, but recognizing their difference allows for a richer and more comprehensive understanding of ethical administration than either framework provides alone.

This convergence is also visible in the relationship between Mettā-mano-kamma (loving-kindness in thought) and the construct of internal moral motivation in ethical leadership theory (Brown & Treviño, 2006) and internalized moral perspective in authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). All three concepts recognize that the ethical quality of leadership is not reducible to observable behavior but depends on the inner orientation from which behavior flows. However, as noted in Section 3, Sāraṇīya-Dhamma is more demanding in this regard: it treats the cultivation of ethical intention as an ongoing moral practice requiring sustained effort and self-examination, rather than as a stable personality trait or leadership characteristic.

4.2 The Critical Dialectic: Loving-Kindness and Administrative Discipline

The most important and underexplored tension in any attempt to apply Sāraṇīya-Dhamma to educational administration is the apparent conflict between the principle of



loving-kindness particularly *Mettā-kāya-kamma* and *Mettā-vacī-kamma* and the institutional necessity of enforcing discipline, managing poor performance, and making difficult decisions that cause harm to individuals.

Educational administrators routinely face situations in which genuine care for the well-being of one person or group conflicts with the institutional responsibilities they carry. A teacher who consistently underperforms must be formally managed, and ultimately dismissed if improvement does not occur. A budget that cannot accommodate all legitimate needs must be cut somewhere, causing real hardship to those affected. A student whose behavior disrupts the learning environment of others must face consequences that are experienced as punitive. In each of these cases, the administrator cannot avoid causing some degree of harm, disappointment, or suffering to individuals within the institution.

A naive application of loving-kindness might suggest that the ethical administrator should avoid or soften these decisions in order to minimize immediate harm. This interpretation, however, misunderstands the philosophical content of *Mettā* as taught in the Buddhist canon. *Mettā* is not the same as permissiveness, conflict avoidance, or the uncritical accommodation of harmful behavior. The canonical literature is explicit that genuine loving-kindness sometimes requires difficult action that allowing harmful conduct to continue unchecked is itself a failure of compassion toward the broader community (Harvey, 2013). The principle of *Sīla-sāmaññatā* (shared moral discipline) makes this even clearer: maintaining shared ethical standards within an institution is itself an expression of care for collective well-being, not a contradiction of it.

What *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* actually demands in these situations is not the avoidance of difficult decisions but a transformation in how they are made and communicated. An administrator applying *Mettā-vacī-kamma* (loving-kindness in speech) to a performance management conversation is not one who softens the message to the point of dishonesty, but one who ensures that the communication is timely, truthful, gentle in tone, genuinely oriented toward the other person's well-being, and free from contempt, frustration, or self-protective motivation. The same disciplinary action, taken from different inner orientations, produces measurably different relational outcomes a distinction that *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* illuminates in ways that standard administrative procedure does not.

This dialectic also extends to the domain of institutional accountability. Modern educational administration operates within external frameworks of performance measurement, regulatory compliance, and statutory accountability that impose obligations on administrators regardless of their personal ethical orientations. An administrator may be required to implement policies that conflict with their judgment about what is fair or compassionate in a specific case. *Sīla-sāmaññatā* offers a partial response to this tension by



distinguishing between compliance with institutional norms which is appropriate and necessary and the cultivation of inner ethical integrity within the space that compliance frameworks leave open. The two are not always in conflict; in many cases, compliance with well-designed institutional standards is itself an expression of shared moral discipline. But where they do conflict, *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* provides the administrator with an ethical orientation that sustains moral integrity even under systemic pressure not by resisting institutional demands, but by ensuring that the manner, intention, and relational quality of administrative action remain ethically grounded.

4.3 Relational Ethics, Power Dynamics, and Organizational Harmony

Educational institutions are not ethically neutral environments. They are structured by significant power asymmetries between administrators and teachers, between teachers and students, between institutional leadership and external regulatory authorities that shape how ethical principles can be applied in practice. Any serious attempt to apply *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* to educational administration must engage honestly with these power dynamics rather than assuming a level relational field that does not exist.

The principle of *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* (fair sharing of resources) is particularly sensitive to power dynamics because resource allocation in educational institutions is rarely a straightforward technical matter. Decisions about budget distribution, workload assignment, professional development opportunities, and institutional recognition are sites of significant political contestation, in which administrators exercise discretionary authority that can either reproduce existing inequities or work actively against them. An administrator informed by *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* approaches these decisions not merely as procedural obligations applying the same criteria to all cases but as ethical opportunities to actively promote equity and reduce structural disadvantage within the institution.

This is a more demanding and politically complex stance than procedural fairness alone, because it requires the administrator to use their institutional authority in ways that may challenge established patterns of resource distribution and privilege. Research in educational leadership suggests that this kind of equity-oriented administration faces significant resistance from both institutional inertia and external accountability pressures that tend to reward measured performance outcomes rather than equity processes (Dimmock & Walker, 2005). *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* does not offer a simple resolution to this tension, but it does provide an ethical framework that keeps the administrator oriented toward collective well-being even when systemic pressures push in a different direction.

The principle of *Diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā* (shared right view) faces a related but distinct challenge in the context of institutional power. Building genuine shared moral understanding across an institution requires the administrator to create conditions in which subordinates feel



genuinely free to express disagreement, raise ethical concerns, and participate in the formation of institutional norms conditions that are undermined by hierarchical authority structures, fear of professional consequences, and cultures of compliance. An administrator who mandates ethical vision from above, however sincerely held, is not practicing *Diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā* but imposing a view which is precisely what this principle cautions against.

This tension points toward a model of educational leadership that is structurally more participatory and dialogic than most current administrative practice. It suggests that the application of *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* requires not only individual ethical cultivation on the part of the administrator but also deliberate institutional design the creation of structures, forums, and norms that make genuine shared moral deliberation possible. This is a significant practical implication that distinguishes the *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* framework from leadership models that locate ethical responsibility primarily in the individual leader.

4.4 Moral Intentionality, Reflective Practice, and Administrative Decision-Making

A distinctive and practically significant contribution of *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* to educational administration is its insistence on moral intentionality as a continuous practice rather than a stable characteristic. Western leadership frameworks, including ethical and authentic leadership theories, tend to treat moral motivation as a trait something a leader either possesses or lacks and to evaluate it through behavioral indicators and follower assessments (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*, grounded in the Buddhist understanding of *cetanā* (intention), treats moral intentionality as something that must be actively cultivated through ongoing self-examination, and that can degrade under conditions of stress, institutional pressure, and accumulated frustration.

This has important implications for how educational administrators understand their own ethical development. Under conditions of chronic workload pressure, bureaucratic demands, interpersonal conflict, and external accountability, the inner ethical orientation that *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* requires is not self-sustaining. It requires deliberate practices of reflection, self-examination, and renewal what contemporary leadership scholarship describes as reflective practice (Schön, 1983, as cited in Northouse, 2022). An administrator who does not engage in such practice may find that their decisions, while procedurally correct, become progressively detached from the compassionate and relational ethical foundation that *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* envisions.

This suggests that leadership development informed by *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* must attend not only to the acquisition of administrative competencies but to the cultivation and maintenance of ethical inner life a dimension of professional development that is largely absent from current administrator training programs, which tend to focus on technical skill, strategic planning, and performance management. The integration of structured reflective



practice into administrator development, informed by the principles of *Mettā-mano-kamma* and *Sīla-sāmaññatā*, represents one of the most concrete and actionable contributions of this framework to educational administration.

4.5 Toward a Realistic and Critically Grounded Model of Ethical Educational Administration

The preceding analysis makes clear that applying *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* to educational administration is neither seamless nor straightforward. It involves genuine tensions between loving-kindness and institutional discipline, between participatory moral community and hierarchical authority, between internally motivated ethics and externally imposed compliance that cannot be resolved by theoretical synthesis alone but must be navigated practically and reflectively by administrators in specific institutional contexts.

This is not a weakness of the framework but its most important strength. A model of ethical educational administration that acknowledges these tensions is more realistic, more honest, and ultimately more useful than one that presents Buddhist principles as a harmonious supplement to existing practice without confronting the structural and relational challenges their application involves. *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* does not promise to make educational administration easy or conflict-free. It offers instead an ethical orientation that equips administrators to engage with difficulty with disciplinary decisions, resource constraints, power dynamics, and institutional pressures in a way that is morally grounded, relationally attentive, and oriented toward the genuine well-being of the entire educational community.

Within this realistic framing, the integrated model proposed in Section 3.4 functions as a normative ideal that guides administrative practice without prescribing specific outcomes. The dispositional layer (*Sāraṇīya-Dhamma*) provides the ethical foundation and inner orientation; the behavioral and relational layer (ethical and authentic leadership) provides the framework for translating that orientation into observable practice; and the organizational and cultural layer (transformational leadership and educational administration theory) provides the institutional context within which sustained ethical practice produces collective outcomes. At each layer, the tensions identified in this discussion serve as productive challenges that administrators must engage thoughtfully not obstacles to the framework's application but constitutive features of what it means to lead ethically in complex organizational environments.

Section 5: Implications (Revised)

5.1 Theoretical Implications

This study makes three distinct theoretical contributions to the literature on educational leadership and organizational ethics.



First, it establishes *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma as a normative ethical framework that is structurally comparable to and philosophically deeper than existing Western leadership theories in specific respects. By demonstrating that the six principles can be systematically mapped onto constructs within ethical, authentic, and transformational leadership theories while simultaneously revealing the interior and relational dimensions those theories undertheorize, this study advances the case for cross-cultural and cross-philosophical approaches to leadership ethics. This contribution is not merely additive; it challenges the implicit assumption within mainstream leadership scholarship that Western ethical frameworks are sufficient or universal, and it opens space for a genuinely pluralistic theoretical discourse in educational administration research (Dimmock & Walker, 2005; House et al., 2004).

Second, this study introduces moral intentionality the ethical quality of inner motivation as a continuous practice rather than a stable trait as a theoretically distinct construct that deserves independent attention in leadership research. Current frameworks treat internal moral motivation as a background characteristic of ethical leaders (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The analysis presented here, informed by the Buddhist concept of *cetanā*, suggests that moral intentionality is better understood as a dynamic and fragile capacity that must be actively cultivated and that degrades under conditions of institutional stress and bureaucratic pressure. Future researchers can operationalize this construct through experience-sampling methodologies that capture moment-to-moment variation in leaders' reported inner orientation during administrative decision-making, or through longitudinal interview studies that track how administrators' ethical motivation evolves across different institutional conditions and career stages.

Third, the integrated three-layer conceptual model proposed in this study dispositional, behavioral-relational, and organizational-cultural offers a structured theoretical architecture that future researchers can use to design empirical studies examining how inner ethical orientation translates into observable leadership behavior and, ultimately, into measurable organizational outcomes. Structural equation modeling could be used to test the relationships between these layers, with latent variables representing dispositional cultivation (measured through adapted mindfulness and moral motivation scales), behavioral integrity (measured through existing ethical leadership scales such as the ELS developed by Brown et al., 2005), and organizational harmony (measured through validated instruments for trust climate, conflict frequency, and collaborative culture). This modeling approach would allow researchers to test whether the dispositional layer mediates or moderates the relationship between individual leadership behavior and organizational outcomes a question that current ethical leadership research has not adequately addressed.



5.2 Practical Implications for Educational Administration

The practical implications of this study are organized around three specific domains of administrative practice: decision-making, conflict management, and institutional culture development.

In the domain of decision-making, the principle of *Mettā-mano-kamma* (loving-kindness in thought) combined with *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* (fair sharing of resources) suggests that educational administrators should institutionalize structured ethical reflection as a formal component of significant decision-making processes. This does not require religious practice; it can be implemented as a secular deliberative protocol in which administrators are required, prior to finalizing resource allocation decisions or personnel actions, to complete a written reflection addressing three questions: What is my genuine intention in making this decision? Who will be affected, and how have I accounted for their well-being? What would a genuinely equitable distribution of this resource or opportunity look like, and how does my decision approximate or deviate from that standard? This protocol transforms ethical reflection from a private and optional practice into a documented and accountable component of administrative procedure, making moral intentionality institutionally visible without imposing any particular religious or philosophical framework on participants.

In the domain of conflict management, the principles of *Mettā-vacī-kamma* (loving-kindness in speech) and *Ditṭhi-sāmaññatā* (shared right view) point toward a specific model of dialogic conflict resolution that differs meaningfully from standard mediation practice. Rather than focusing primarily on reaching agreement or restoring procedural compliance, this model prioritizes the restoration of genuine mutual understanding between parties what the Buddhist tradition calls the re-establishment of shared right view. In practice, this means that conflict resolution processes in educational institutions should include structured dialogue phases in which each party is required to articulate, to the satisfaction of the other, their understanding of the other's perspective and interests before any negotiation of outcomes begins. This shifts the communicative goal from positional bargaining to genuine epistemic convergence, and research in organizational conflict management suggests that this approach produces more durable resolutions and stronger relational repair than outcome-focused mediation alone (Northouse, 2022).

In the domain of institutional culture development, the principle of *Sīla-sāmaññatā* (shared moral discipline) suggests that educational institutions should move beyond compliance-based ethical frameworks codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, performance management systems toward participatory processes of ethical norm formation. Concretely, this could take the form of annual institutional ethics dialogues in which administrators, teachers, and relevant staff collectively review, discuss, and where necessary revise the ethical



norms that govern their shared working environment. These dialogues differ from standard policy consultation processes in that their explicit purpose is not to inform administrators' decisions but to build genuine shared ownership of the institution's ethical standards to move from compliance toward what *Sīla-sāmaññatā* envisions as voluntary, collectively sustained moral discipline.

5.3 Implications for Leadership Development and Training

The findings of this study suggest a concrete and structured approach to integrating *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma-informed ethics into existing secular leadership development programs for educational administrators. The following curricular module is proposed as a template that can be adapted to different institutional and cultural contexts.

The module, titled *Ethical Foundations of Relational Leadership*, is designed as a six-session program of approximately three hours per session, suitable for integration into existing administrator preparation programs or continuing professional development curricula. It does not require participants to hold any particular religious or philosophical commitments; the Buddhist origins of the framework are presented as intellectual and historical context rather than as doctrinal content.

Session one, *The Interior Dimension of Leadership Ethics*, introduces the distinction between behavioral compliance and moral intentionality, drawing on both Western authentic leadership theory and the Buddhist concept of *cetanā*. Participants examine case studies of administrators who made procedurally identical decisions from different inner orientations and analyze the relational and organizational consequences of each. The session concludes with an introduction to structured ethical journaling as a professional practice.

Session two, *Ethical Communication in Administrative Practice*, focuses on *Mettā-vacī-kamma* and its application to high-stakes administrative communication scenarios, including performance management conversations, conflict mediation, and institutional announcements of difficult decisions. Participants practice applying the five canonical standards of ethical speech timely, truthful, gentle, beneficial, and spoken with goodwill to role-play scenarios drawn from realistic administrative contexts, and debrief on the practical tensions this standard creates when combined with institutional accountability requirements.

Session three, *Equity, Resource Distribution, and Institutional Generosity*, addresses *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* in relation to contemporary frameworks of educational equity and distributive justice. Participants analyze real institutional resource allocation decisions using both procedural fairness criteria and the more demanding standard of actively promoting equity and reducing structural disadvantage. The session introduces the decision-reflection protocol described in Section 5.2 and provides practice in its application.



Session four, *Navigating Discipline, Accountability, and Compassion*, directly addresses the critical dialectic examined in Section 4.2 the tension between loving-kindness and institutional discipline. Participants work through complex case studies involving performance dismissal, student discipline, and policy enforcement, developing their capacity to make and communicate difficult decisions in ways that are simultaneously firm, fair, and relationally attentive. The session draws on both *Sīla-sāmaññatā* and ethical leadership theory to frame accountability as an expression of genuine care rather than as its antithesis.

Session five, *Building Shared Moral Vision*, focuses on *Ditṭhi-sāmaññatā* and its organizational implications. Participants design institutional dialogue processes for their own schools or institutions, with attention to the structural conditions psychological safety, genuine participation, freedom from hierarchical pressure that make shared moral deliberation possible. The session engages critically with the tension between participatory ethics and administrative authority identified in Section 4.3.

Session six, *Sustaining Ethical Practice Under Institutional Pressure*, addresses the fragility of moral intentionality under conditions of chronic stress, bureaucratic demand, and external accountability pressure. Participants develop personal ethical sustainability plans that integrate structured reflective practice including journaling, peer consultation, and periodic ethical review into their ongoing professional routines. The session closes with a collective institutional ethics dialogue structured according to the model described in Section 5.2, giving participants direct experience of the practice they will be asked to facilitate in their own institutions.

This curricular design is explicitly secular, practically grounded, and directly responsive to the real tensions that educational administrators face. It does not ask administrators to adopt Buddhist philosophy as a personal commitment but invites them to engage with its ethical insights as a serious intellectual resource for the development of more reflective, relational, and morally grounded administrative practice.

Section 6: Limitations (Revised)

This study has several significant limitations that must be engaged honestly and critically rather than acknowledged perfunctorily. Doing so is not merely a scholarly convention but a necessary act of intellectual integrity, given the ambitious scope of the theoretical synthesis undertaken here. Each limitation identified below represents a genuine constraint on the framework's current form and points toward the conditions under which its claims must be qualified.



6.1 The Absence of Empirical Validation

The most fundamental limitation of this study is its exclusively conceptual nature. As a narrative-conceptual review, it constructs a theoretical framework through the synthesis and interpretation of existing literature rather than through the collection and analysis of empirical data (Booth et al., 2016). This means that the integrated model proposed in Section 3.4, the critical dialectics examined in Section 4, and the practical protocols recommended in Section 5 are all theoretically derived rather than empirically tested. There is currently no direct evidence that educational administrators who cultivate the dispositions described by *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* actually produce the organizational outcomes greater harmony, stronger trust, more equitable resource distribution that the framework predicts.

This limitation is more consequential than it might initially appear. Conceptual frameworks in leadership research have a well-documented tendency to present normative ideals that prove significantly more difficult to enact in real organizational environments than theoretical analysis suggests (Yukl, 2013). The gap between the ethical ideal and the institutional reality is not merely a matter of implementation difficulty; it reflects deep structural tensions between the relational and dispositional demands of frameworks like *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* and the bureaucratic, performance-driven logic that governs most contemporary educational institutions. Until empirical studies examine how administrators actually navigate these tensions in practice what they do, how they feel, what compromises they make, and what outcomes result the framework remains a normative proposal rather than a validated model. Future research must treat this gap as a primary methodological priority.

6.2 Epistemological Challenges of Cross-Cultural Framework Translation

A second and more philosophically complex limitation concerns the epistemological risks involved in translating a framework that is deeply embedded in one cultural and religious tradition into the analytical language of another. *Sāraṇīya-Dhamma* was developed within the Theravāda Buddhist monastic tradition, in a social context defined by voluntary renunciation, shared religious commitment, and a form of communal life that is structurally very different from the bureaucratic, legally regulated, and professionally diverse environment of a modern educational institution (Keown, 2016; Harvey, 2013).

The conceptual translation performed in this study mapping *mettā* onto moral motivation, *sīla* onto professional ethics, *ditṭhi-sāmaññatā* onto shared organizational vision inevitably involves a degree of interpretive reduction. Concepts that carry rich ontological and soteriological significance within their original tradition are necessarily simplified when extracted from that tradition and reframed in the language of organizational theory. The risk is not only that nuance is lost but that the translation distorts the original concepts in ways



that may be invisible to readers who lack deep familiarity with the source tradition. For instance, the canonical meaning of *mettā* as an unlimited, non-discriminating orientation of goodwill toward all beings including those one finds difficult, threatening, or morally objectionable is philosophically more demanding than any concept currently available in Western leadership theory, and reducing it to "supportive leadership behavior" or "compassionate communication" may domesticate it to the point of misrepresentation.

This epistemological limitation also raises the question of who has the authority to perform such translations. Cross-cultural framework development in organizational research has been criticized for reproducing forms of intellectual appropriation in which concepts from non-Western traditions are selectively extracted and repackaged to serve the explanatory needs of Western academic discourse, without adequate engagement with the tradition's own scholars, practitioners, and interpretive communities (Prasad, 2012). This study has attempted to mitigate this risk by grounding its interpretation of *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma in authoritative canonical sources and peer-reviewed Buddhist scholarship, but it cannot claim to have resolved the deeper epistemological challenge that cross-cultural conceptual work inevitably involves.

6.3 Generalizability Across Secular, Multi-Faith, and Culturally Diverse Educational Contexts

A third limitation concerns the generalizability of the framework across the full diversity of educational contexts in which it might be applied. The framework was developed with reference to educational administration broadly conceived, but its applicability is likely to vary significantly depending on the cultural, religious, and institutional context in which it is deployed.

In predominantly Buddhist cultural contexts such as Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, or Cambodia administrators and staff may already possess cultural familiarity with the concepts underlying *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma, which could facilitate their application without requiring extensive philosophical introduction. In secular Western educational contexts, however, the Buddhist origins of the framework may generate institutional resistance, particularly in environments governed by strict principles of religious neutrality in public institutions. While Section 5.3 has attempted to address this by presenting the curricular module in explicitly secular terms, the question of whether concepts like *mettā* and *cetanā* can be fully operationalized outside their Buddhist philosophical context whether the secular translation retains enough of the original framework's depth to produce its proposed effects remains genuinely open.

In multi-faith educational contexts, the challenge is different again. An institution whose staff hold diverse religious and philosophical commitments may find that some



members embrace the relational and harmony-centered values of *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma as consistent with their own traditions, while others experience the framework's Buddhist framing as exclusionary or inappropriate. The principle of *Diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā* (shared right view) is particularly sensitive in this respect: the aspiration toward shared moral understanding is philosophically coherent within a tradition that posits the existence of *sammā-diṭṭhi* (right view) as an objective ethical standard, but it sits less comfortably in pluralistic institutional environments that are committed to the equal validity of diverse moral perspectives. How administrators can pursue the spirit of this principle genuine moral convergence without imposing a particular philosophical tradition's understanding of what "right" means is a question the current framework does not fully resolve.

6.4 Structural Barriers to Implementation in Contemporary Educational Systems

Perhaps the most practically significant limitation of this study is its insufficient engagement with the structural conditions of contemporary educational administration that directly constrain an administrator's capacity to enact the principles of *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma, regardless of their personal ethical commitments.

Modern educational institutions operate within dense frameworks of statutory regulation, governmental policy, union agreements, and institutional governance structures that significantly limit administrators' discretionary authority. The principle of *Sādhāraṇa-bhogitā* (fair sharing of resources), for instance, envisions an administrator who can distribute resources according to an ethically grounded assessment of collective need and equity. In practice, however, resource allocation in most educational systems is governed by formulaic funding models, centrally determined staffing ratios, and budget constraints imposed by external authorities that leave administrators with limited discretion to redistribute resources according to their own ethical judgment. An administrator who wishes to direct additional support toward the most disadvantaged members of their institution may find that regulatory frameworks and accountability metrics actively prevent this not through malice but through the structural logic of systems designed for standardization and measurable equity rather than responsive, relationship-centered fairness.

The principle of *Diṭṭhi-sāmaññatā* (shared right view) faces a similarly structural constraint. Building genuine shared moral vision across an institution requires time for dialogue, deliberation, and the slow development of mutual understanding. Contemporary educational administration, however, operates under conditions of intense time pressure, with administrators' attention consumed by compliance reporting, performance data management, external inspection cycles, and crisis response. The structural conditions of modern educational management are, in important respects, systematically hostile to the kind of reflective, relational, and deliberative practice that *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma envisions.



Acknowledging this is not a counsel of despair but a realistic recognition that the framework's application requires not only individual ethical cultivation but also advocacy for structural conditions adequate time for deliberation, meaningful administrative autonomy, and accountability frameworks that reward relational and ethical quality rather than only measurable performance outcomes that many current educational systems do not provide.

Finally, the intense external performance accountability that characterizes contemporary educational systems through standardized testing, institutional rankings, inspection regimes, and public reporting of outcome metrics creates systemic pressure on administrators to prioritize measurable institutional performance over the relational, ethical, and harmony-centered values that *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma promotes. Research consistently shows that high-stakes accountability environments increase competitive behavior, reduce collaborative trust, and generate ethical compromises among administrators who feel that their institution's survival depends on performance metrics that are structurally indifferent to relational quality (Northouse, 2022; Dimmock & Walker, 2005). An ethical framework that does not explicitly engage with these systemic pressures risks producing administrators who are personally committed to its principles but structurally unable to enact them a form of ethical aspiration that, without accompanying structural change, may generate more frustration than transformation.

Section 7: Conclusion

This study set out to examine how *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma six Buddhist principles of harmonious coexistence drawn from the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* can be integrated with contemporary theories of ethical and transformational leadership to construct a more philosophically complete framework for educational administration. What has emerged from this analysis is more than a theoretical synthesis. It is a fundamental challenge to the assumptions that currently govern how leadership success in education is defined, measured, and developed.

Contemporary educational administration operates within a paradigm that privileges efficiency, measurable performance, and institutional accountability as the primary criteria of administrative quality. This paradigm is not without value; accountability systems, performance standards, and institutional effectiveness matter enormously to the students, families, and communities that educational institutions serve. But as the analysis in this study has repeatedly demonstrated, this paradigm carries a significant blind spot: it systematically undervalues the interior, relational, and collective dimensions of leadership the quality of moral intention, the ethical texture of everyday relationships, and the depth of shared moral



understanding within an institution that determine whether an educational community is genuinely flourishing or merely performing.

This blind spot is not accidental. It reflects the individualistic and behavioristic assumptions embedded in the Western intellectual traditions from which mainstream leadership theory has largely been constructed. When ethics is understood primarily as individual moral behavior, when leadership is evaluated primarily through observable outcomes and follower perceptions, and when organizational success is measured primarily through standardized performance metrics, the relational and dispositional dimensions of ethical life become theoretically invisible not because they are unimportant, but because the frameworks being used are not designed to see them.

Sāraṇīya-Dhamma makes them visible. By locating the ethical foundation of leadership in the cultivation of inner orientation in the quality of intention from which action flows and by understanding ethical community as a mutually constituted condition that emerges from the texture of relationships rather than from the conduct of any single leader, it offers a fundamentally different account of what ethical administration is and what it requires. This is not merely a non-Western supplement to existing theory. It is a philosophical reorientation that challenges the field to reconceive leadership success not as the achievement of measurable institutional outcomes by a morally competent individual, but as the collective cultivation of harmonious, trust-based, and morally purposeful community by people who are genuinely committed to one another's well-being.

This reorientation has consequences that extend beyond theory. If moral intentionality is a continuous practice rather than a stable trait if it degrades under institutional pressure and must be actively renewed then leadership development cannot be reduced to the acquisition of competencies and strategies. It must include the cultivation of inner ethical life: structured reflection, moral self-examination, and the development of relational sensitivity that allows administrators to navigate the genuine tensions between loving-kindness and discipline, between participatory ethics and institutional authority, between collective well-being and external accountability, with wisdom rather than merely with procedural correctness.

If shared moral vision is not a strategic alignment tool but a genuine epistemic and ethical convergence a condition in which members of an institution share not only goals but a deep understanding of why ethical conduct matters then institutional culture development cannot be achieved through mission statements, policy documents, or top-down communication campaigns. It requires the creation of genuine deliberative spaces in which administrators, teachers, and staff participate as moral agents in the ongoing formation of their shared ethical life together.



And if fair sharing of resources is not merely procedural equity but an expression of non-attachment and active generosity an orientation that holds institutional resources in trust for collective well-being rather than in service of competitive advantage then the accountability frameworks that currently govern educational systems must be critically examined for the ways in which they structurally incentivize the opposite: resource hoarding, competitive individualism, and the strategic management of appearance rather than the genuine cultivation of equity.

These are not comfortable conclusions. They ask educational systems, institutions, and administrators to examine not only how they lead but why and to hold that question open with the kind of honest, sustained moral seriousness that *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma has always demanded of those who take it seriously. They ask the field of educational leadership research to expand its conceptual horizons beyond the frameworks it has inherited from Western management theory and to engage genuinely with the philosophical traditions Buddhist, Confucian, Indigenous, and others that offer different and equally rigorous accounts of what it means to lead well in community with others.

The limitations of this study are real and have been engaged honestly. The framework is conceptual rather than empirical, its cross-cultural translation involves irreducible interpretive risks, and the structural conditions of contemporary educational systems present formidable barriers to its enactment. But these limitations do not diminish the significance of the central argument. They define the research agenda that must follow.

Future studies should examine empirically how educational administrators who deliberately cultivate the dispositions described by *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma navigate the structural tensions identified in this analysis what strategies they develop, what compromises they make, and what organizational outcomes result. Comparative research should explore how the framework applies across different cultural, religious, and institutional contexts, identifying where its principles travel readily and where they require significant adaptation. Intervention studies should test the curricular module proposed in Section 5.3, measuring its effects on administrators' moral intentionality, reflective practice, and relational leadership behavior over time. And theoretical work should continue the cross-cultural dialogue initiated here, bringing Buddhist ethical philosophy into sustained conversation with other non-Western leadership traditions to build a genuinely pluralistic and philosophically rich foundation for educational administration scholarship.

The integration of *Sāraṇīya*-Dhamma into educational administration theory does not resolve the ethical challenges that educational leaders face. It deepens them by revealing dimensions of ethical life that performance-driven paradigms have rendered invisible, by restoring moral seriousness to the interior and relational dimensions of leadership, and by



positioning harmony, compassion, and shared moral vision not as soft ideals peripheral to the real work of administration, but as the very conditions without which educational institutions cannot become and remain genuinely human places.

That is the paradigm shift this study proposes. Not a rejection of effectiveness, accountability, or institutional performance, but a profound expansion of what those terms mean and of what we are willing to count as evidence that an educational institution, and the people who lead it, are truly doing well.

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