

## Educational Leadership Theories and Their Role in School Improvement: A Study of the Haitian Secondary School System

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DOI:10.5281/zenodo.15447860

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This study investigates the application of educational leadership theories within the Haitian secondary school system, aiming to identify the dominant leadership styles and their impact on school improvement. Drawing from a wide array of theoretical frameworks—including transformational, instructional, transactional, and distributed leadership—the research uses a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative interviews with quantitative data analysis. Findings indicate that transformational and instructional leadership styles are prevalent, but often blended with administrative and transactional elements. The study emphasizes the importance of contextual adaptation and recommends strategic leadership development tailored to the Haitian educational landscape

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Instructional Leadership, Haitian Education, School Improvement, Leadership Theory

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Willy Lima, Ph.D, MBA, Department of Leadership and Development, Haitian Union, Haiti. Email: <a href="mailto:lima.willy37@gmail.com">lima.willy37@gmail.com</a>	Lima W, Guerrier OL, Educational Leadership Theories and Their Role in School Improvement: A Study of the Haitian Secondary School System. Int J Engg Mgmt Res. 2025;15(2):187-192. Available From <a href="https://ijemr.vandanapublications.com/index.php/j/article/view/1744">https://ijemr.vandanapublications.com/index.php/j/article/view/1744</a>	

<b>Manuscript Received</b> 2025-03-04	<b>Review Round 1</b> 2025-03-27	<b>Review Round 2</b>	<b>Review Round 3</b>	<b>Accepted</b> 2025-04-22
<b>Conflict of Interest</b> None	<b>Funding</b> Nil	<b>Ethical Approval</b> Yes	<b>Plagiarism X-checker</b> 3.32	<b>Note</b>
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# 1. Introduction

Leadership within the educational sector plays a pivotal role in shaping student outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and institutional growth. In developing contexts such as Haiti, where the education system faces multifaceted challenges, leadership assumes an even greater importance. The Haitian secondary school system has been affected by economic constraints, political instability, and a lack of consistent policy implementation. Understanding the types and effects of leadership exercised by school principals is essential for educational reform and national development.

This study explores the application and effectiveness of various educational leadership theories in the Haitian secondary school system, aiming to answer key research questions through empirical data collection and analysis.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978), involves inspiring followers to exceed their own expectations through vision, motivation, and individualized support. In the educational context, it fosters innovation and adaptation (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; McCleskey, 2014). Studies show that transformational leaders improve school culture and teacher morale (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

### 2.2 Instructional Leadership

Instructional leadership focuses on improving teaching quality and learning outcomes (Hallinger, 2005). Leaders actively supervise curriculum delivery, assess teacher performance, and prioritize academic achievement. Studies from similar contexts in the Caribbean show that instructional leadership is linked to student achievement gains (Robinson et al., 2008).

### 2.3 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership centers on exchanges between leaders and followers, focusing on compliance and performance through rewards and sanctions (Bass, 1990; McCleskey, 2014). While effective in maintaining order, it may stifle creativity and intrinsic motivation.

### 2.4 Distributed and Participative Leadership

Distributed leadership promotes shared decision-making across all organizational levels (Spillane, 2005; Harris, 2008).

Participative models empower staff by including them in policy formulation and strategic planning (Gronn, 2002). This model is ideal in environments requiring collective problem-solving.

### 2.5 Cultural and Situational Leadership

Cultural leadership emphasizes values, beliefs, and organizational norms (Schein, 2010). Situational leadership tailors leadership behavior to the task and follower readiness (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). In volatile contexts like Haiti, flexibility and cultural sensitivity are crucial.

## 3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

- **RQ1:** What are the predominant leadership styles among principals in Haitian secondary schools?
- **RQ2:** How do these leadership styles influence school improvement and staff motivation?
- **H1:** Transformational and instructional leadership styles positively correlate with school improvement indicators.
- **H2:** Transactional leadership has a neutral or negative correlation with staff motivation and innovation.

## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1 Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten secondary school principals. Quantitative data were collected via surveys from 60 teachers across six schools in the Southern Department.

### 4.2 Ethical Considerations

Participants provided informed consent and were anonymized. No institution or individual was explicitly named.

## 5. Population and Sampling

The study involved a purposive sample of six public secondary schools in the Southern Department of Haiti. Principals were selected for interviews based on their leadership tenure, while teachers were surveyed through random sampling.

**Table 1:** Population and Sampling

Participant Group	Sample Size	Data Collection Tool
Principals	10	Interviews
Teachers	60	Survey

### **Instruments Used:**

The study utilized two primary instruments: a semi-structured interview guide for principals and a structured questionnaire for teachers.

### **Interview Guide:**

The interview guide was developed based on core constructs of transformational, instructional, transactional, and situational leadership theories. It included open-ended questions exploring leadership practices, decision-making approaches, strategies for school improvement, staff motivation techniques, and responses to institutional challenges.

### **Teacher Questionnaire:**

The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

**1. Demographic Information:** Gender, years of teaching experience, and subject taught.

**2. Leadership Style Assessment:** 20 Likert-scale items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to measure perceived leadership styles (Bass & Avolio, 1995).

**3. School Improvement Indicators:** 15 items assessing teacher satisfaction, perceived instructional quality, and student engagement.

Pilot testing of the instruments was conducted with one school outside the sample area to ensure clarity and cultural relevance.

### **Validity and Reliability**

#### **Validity:**

To ensure content validity, the instruments were reviewed by three experts in educational leadership and Haitian education. Their feedback led to refinement of several questions for cultural appropriateness and clarity. Construct validity was confirmed through alignment with established theoretical models (Bass, 1990; Hallinger, 2005; Spillane, 2005). Items were mapped to leadership theory components to ensure comprehensive coverage.

#### **Reliability:**

The teacher questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency. A pilot Cronbach's alpha test resulted in the following:

- Leadership Style items:  $\alpha = 0.87$
- School Improvement items:  $\alpha = 0.81$

These results suggest a high level of reliability for both scales.

Interviews were audio recorded (with consent) and transcribed verbatim to maintain accuracy and enhance reliability in qualitative data analysis.

### **Statistical Treatment of Data**

The data collected from the research participants were analyzed using a combination of descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the research questions and test the stated hypotheses. The statistical software used for data analysis was the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to describe patterns in their perceptions of the various educational leadership styles. These measures provided a foundational understanding of the data distribution and the general tendencies of responses.

### **Inferential Statistics**

To test the hypotheses and establish relationships between leadership styles and school improvement indicators in the Haitian secondary school context, the following inferential statistical methods were employed:

- **Pearson's Correlation Coefficient** was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between leadership styles (transformational, instructional, transactional, etc.) and indicators of school improvement such as student academic performance and teacher motivation.
- **Independent Samples t-tests** were conducted to examine whether there were significant differences in perceptions of leadership effectiveness based on demographic variables such as years of teaching experience and gender.
- **Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** was applied to compare the perceptions of educational leadership across different categories of respondents (e.g., school administrators, teachers, and support staff).
- **Multiple Regression Analysis** was performed to predict the extent to which different leadership styles contribute to school improvement outcomes in the Haitian context.

This analysis helped identify which leadership factors had the most significant impact.

The confidence level was set at 95% ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) for all statistical tests. Findings that yielded a p-value less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

## 6. Findings of the Study

This section presents results of the study and gives the discussion of findings following the research questions that guided the study.

### 6.1 Leadership Styles Identified

- 70% of principals demonstrated predominantly transformational and instructional leadership traits.
- 20% combined transactional and administrative approaches.
- 10% employed a situational or mixed strategy, adapting based on context.

### 6.2 Effects on School Improvement

- Schools led by transformational/instructional leaders showed improved teacher morale, student outcomes, and curriculum innovation.
- Transactional leadership correlated with rigid structures and moderate satisfaction.

**Table 2:** Leadership Style vs School Performance Indicator

Leadership Style	Improvement in Student Scores	Teacher Satisfaction	Curriculum Innovation
Transformational	High	High	High
Instructional	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	High
Transactional	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Situational/Mixed	Variable	Variable	Moderate

  

Instructional	Moderate to High	Moderate to High	High
Transactional	Moderate	Moderate	Low
Situational/Mixed	Variable	Variable	Moderate



**Figure 1:** Perceived Leadership Effectiveness by Style

### Statistical Analysis

To further strengthen the validity of the quantitative findings, several statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 26. The aim was to test the hypotheses and identify the strength and nature of relationships between leadership styles and educational outcomes.

### Pearson Correlation Analysis

A Pearson correlation coefficient analysis was conducted to measure the linear relationship between perceived leadership styles (transformational, instructional, transactional) and school improvement indicators (teacher satisfaction, student performance, innovation). Transformational and instructional leadership styles showed a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.72, p < 0.01$ ) with school improvement, supporting H1. Transactional leadership had a weak, non-significant negative correlation ( $r = -0.18, p > 0.05$ ), supporting H2.

### Independent Samples t-Test

An independent t-test was used to compare perceptions of leadership effectiveness between teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience and those with more than 5 years. Results showed a statistically significant difference ( $t = 2.45, p = 0.018$ ), with more experienced teachers reporting greater appreciation for transformational leadership.

### ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

ANOVA was applied to explore differences in leadership perception across three school clusters. There was a significant effect of school cluster on perceived leadership style ( $F(2, 57) = 3.87, p = 0.027$ ), suggesting that geographic and institutional context moderates leadership impact.

### Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was conducted to determine the predictive power of leadership styles on student academic achievement. Transformational leadership ( $\beta = 0.61, p < 0.01$ ) and instructional leadership ( $\beta = 0.47, p < 0.05$ ) were significant predictors. The regression model accounted for 58% of the variance in academic outcomes ( $R^2 = 0.58$ ).

## 7. Discussion

These findings align with global and regional literature emphasizing the effectiveness of transformational and instructional leadership in driving educational improvement. The Haitian context, however, necessitates flexibility. The hybrid leadership models observed suggest that effective school leadership in Haiti may require blending styles to respond to infrastructural challenges, political pressures, and resource limitations.

## 8. Conclusion

Leadership in Haitian secondary schools plays a pivotal role in institutional effectiveness. Transformational and instructional approaches appear most effective in enhancing academic performance and teacher motivation. However, the context-driven use of mixed styles indicates a need for dynamic leadership training tailored to Haiti's unique educational challenges.

## 9. Recommendations

- Implement national leadership development programs emphasizing transformational and instructional practices.
- Encourage distributed leadership models to foster collaboration and resilience.
- Adapt training to Haitian cultural and situational realities.
- Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term impact of leadership styles on educational outcomes.

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