

Assessing the influence of teacher leadership styles on motivation and academic outcomes among secondary school students

Insaf Khoudri*,

English department, ENS, Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco

*Corresponding Author: insafkhoudri1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The quality of teaching, teacher leadership style, student satisfaction, and academic outcomes collectively serve as crucial predictors of the competence of graduates and the overall success of educational institutions. This study aimed to investigate the significance of classroom and teacher leadership in the context of enhancing students' motivation and academic achievements. Employing a quantitative approach via a questionnaire, the study focused on Moroccan EFL students, specifically targeting first- and second-year baccalaureate students majoring in physics and first-year experimental sciences at Al Ahd Al Jadid Secondary School in the Taounat region. The study's findings revealed that a substantial 97.9% of participants favored transformational leadership, with 61% opting for transactional leadership, and a modest 14.2% choosing laissez-faire leadership. These results suggest that effective teachers may employ a combination of transformational and transactional leadership styles, depending on the specific circumstances and needs of the classroom. This study highlights the importance of flexible and adaptive leadership in education and its potential impact on students' motivation and academic success.

Keywords: academic outcomes; student satisfaction; teacher leadership style

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1. INTRODUCTION

In our rapidly evolving and intricate 21st-century society, acquiring specific leadership skills has become an essential undertaking for individuals in all fields who value their responsibilities. Within an educational setting, a teacher's role extends beyond mere lesson planning, knowledge dissemination, and ensuring student comprehension (Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Greenier & Whitehead, 2019). Nonetheless, good teachers must also be able to motivate students and create a conducive learning environment (Bogler et al., 2013; Cheong Cheng, 1994; Greenier & Whitehead, 2019). Some teachers have a firm grasp of the tasks associated with teaching, yet they fell short in comprehending the essence of their roles as educators (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016). Teacher leaders set themselves apart by actively driving change. Leaders typically establish principles and behavior within a specific framework. On the other hand, the absence of a leader results in the absence of guidelines, integrity, and a clear vision, leading to the potential breakdown of the entity. In fact, Educators' ability to take initiative and exert their professional impact play vital roles in the endeavor to enhance schools and educational systems (Harris et al., 2017; Campbell et al. 2018). Shen et al. (2020) claim that enhancing schools is a multifaceted task, and relying solely on principals is insufficient to achieve and uphold the desired levels of school improvement.

Fostering a positive classroom environment requires the deployment of leadership strategies, particularly in educational levels such as secondary school, where teenagers are present. Previous

studies have indicated that secondary school teachers frequently view classroom management as a source of stress, which subsequently contributes to their disengagement from their professional responsibilities (Galand et al., 2007). When leadership is lacking, it has a direct effect on classroom management. Insufficient mastery of effective classroom management techniques leads to student disengagement, frustration, diminished interest, and ultimately, poor academic performance and unfavorable consequences. These students are more prone to disruptive behavior, showing disrespect towards peers, and, in extreme cases, even resorting to violence against teachers (Peist et al., 2020; Longobardi et al., 2019). Teachers at the secondary level encounter psychosocial risk factors in their work environment, making them susceptible to experiencing elevated levels of burnout (García-Carmona et al., 2019; Bass et al., 2016), disengagement (Galand et al., 2007), dissatisfaction (De Cordova et al., 2019), and career withdrawal (Curran et al., 2019; Peist et al., 2020). Emotional Intelligence (EI) proves to be a significant psychological asset in mitigating the effects of work-related stress on both health and well-being (Iriarte-Redín & ErroGarcés, 2020; Mérida-López et coll., 2020).

Insufficient exploration and application exist regarding how teachers can assume leadership roles within their classrooms, both in preservice training and teacher preparation programs, as well as in professional development (Nasser, 2017; Nguyen & Hunter, 2018; Rogers & Scales, 2013; Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Greenier & Whitehead, 2019). Leadership plays a vital role in driving improvements in student achievement and overall school performance (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Shen et al., 2020). Nevertheless, there exists a scarcity of empirical studies focusing on classroom leadership and its contribution to enhancing student learning and motivation (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016). Furthermore, the exploration of leadership theories within the context of classroom learning in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) remains largely uncharted territory (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016; Shah, 2017). If any such explorations exist, they are influenced by the diversity of cultures and student characteristics (Greenier & Whitehead, 2019; Ma & Tsui, 2015; DeDeyn, 2021). Moreover, it's worth noting that there is a scarcity of quantitative empirical studies on leadership, and the relationship between teacher leadership and student achievement remains unclear and inadequately established (Harris, 2005; Bolden, 2004). Additionally, the field of TESOL has yet to fully explore teacher leadership (Greenier & Whitehead, 2019; Shah, 2017). The literature on education and leadership often overlooks in-class teacher leadership traits and their impact on students. Therefore, conducting research on teacher leadership within the classroom and its effects on students' foreign language learning outcomes and motivation represents a distinctive approach to leadership research within the teaching context (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Given these gaps, the current research aims to examine the impact of three distinct leadership approaches which are transformative, transactional and laissez-faire leadership that teachers can employ on the motivation as well as the academic achievement of Moroccan EFL secondary school students. To achieve this purpose, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) To what extent is classroom and teacher leadership significant?
- 2) Which leadership approach has the potential to enhance students' motivation and academic achievements?

What is and why Leadership?

When it comes to constructing a specific explanation for teacher leadership, an immediate challenge presents itself. It is evident from different sources that there are various, overlapping meanings of this notion. That is, there is no globally accepted definition of leadership, and there is no consensus on the best strategy for developing leadership and leaders (Muijs & Harris, 2003). Hogan & Kaiser (2005) contend that the concept of leadership holds significant importance within the realm of

human sciences. According to Susanto et al. (2020), leadership possesses the capacity to establish self-control and self-regulation.

It has been established that the effectiveness of reform projects depends on teachers taking an active role in leading and promoting change. The process by which teachers influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to improve teaching and learning practices with the ultimate goal of enhancing student learning and achievement is referred to as teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004; Harris & Jones, 2019). According to Susanto et al. (2020) encouragement and exercise of influence are the two main responsibilities of leadership. The capacity to successfully direct followers toward the achievement of a goal distinguishes leaders (Wahlstrom et al., 2010); that is, effective leaders excel at creating relationships and establishing respect (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Indeed, as asserted by Jamali et al. (2022), there is a general consensus that leaders need to exhibit heightened responsibility when making decisions. Hogan & Kaiser (2005) argue that leadership can be anticipated based on individual traits, with personality being a determining factor in distinguishing effective leaders from those who are not. Amidst educational reforms, stakeholders are progressively recognizing the unique and crucial role teachers occupy within the classroom. This recognition extends beyond mere delegation of administrative tasks; it encompasses the allocation of responsibilities to foster impactful transformation (Shen et al., 2020).

Fostering leadership skills is a pivotal element in enhancing the quality of learning and instruction in education. Effective leadership contributes to the success and growth of various organizations. This success, in turn, leads to improved psychological well-being for those involved (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). The significance of proficient leadership abilities in shaping teachers' professional success and students' academic achievements is recognized across multiple studies. Notable works by Kim et al. (2000), Lee et al. (2009), Ma et al. (2017), and Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) demonstrate that the classroom environment significantly influences student motivation, active engagement, and academic performance. It's important to note that being a skilled teacher doesn't automatically guarantee possessing effective leadership abilities. Therefore, in addition to aid students in achieving course objectives, as effective teaching does, teacher leadership has the potential to profoundly alter students' educational approach, boosting their autonomy, self-efficacy, and enthusiasm for learning (Slavich & Zimbardo, 2012). The effects of teacher leadership on students' educational values, beliefs, and skills can also translate into positive outcomes such as course satisfaction and grades (Bogler et al., 2013).

Evidently, leadership stands out as one of the teachers attributes that partly impact both teaching methods and teacher-student relationships, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). According to Thrash (2009), leaders within academic institutions need to possess diverse leadership skills in order to enhance their effectiveness within these institutions. According to Indrasari (2017) within the educational context, the effectiveness of school members depends heavily on multitude of factors, encompassing leadership approach and the working atmosphere.

Full Range Leadership Model

One of the most well-known paradigms of the neo-charismatic leadership theories introduced by Avolio and Bass (1991) House (1977) Burns (1978) Bass (1985) that are currently under discussion is the Full Range of Leadership Theory (FRLT) (Verlage et al., 2012). The application of the FRLM in the context of higher education has yielded proof that the transformative leadership approach is an efficient way for educators to lead (Jackson et al., 2013; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Lowe et al., 1996; and

Wang et al., 2011). The FRLT suggests that there are three styles of leadership; transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach that aims to empower followers to attain ambitious objectives and evolve into leaders themselves (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This style includes four key leader characteristics: idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration. Idealized Influence is further categorized into two aspects: attributed and behavioral. Attributed pertains to leaders who exhibit charisma, authority, and uphold elevated ideals (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). Teachers with charisma establish positive connections with their students and treat them in a respectful and equitable manner (DeDeyn, 2021). Behavioral involves the tangible behaviors and statements that reflect a leader's beliefs and values. Intellectual Stimulation involves leaders encouraging their followers to challenge assumptions, think creatively and innovatively, and develop critical thinking skills (Antonakis & House, 2002). Through Intellectual Stimulation, teachers can introduce socially controversial topics to students, prompting them to think critically and explore potential solutions. Inspirational Motivation is another trait of transformational leadership, where leaders inspire and motivate their followers with confidence, aiming to elevate expectations and help individuals realize their maximum potential. In a classroom context, teachers who effectively generate enthusiasm for classroom projects and encourage students to actively participate embody this trait (DeDeyn, 2021). Individualized Consideration characterizes leaders who take into account the unique needs, strengths, and weaknesses of their followers (Erdel & Takkaç, 2020). In an educational setting, students have varying requirements; some may benefit from autonomy and encouragement, while others might thrive under more structured guidance. Transformative leaders strive to understand and cater to these individual preferences, fostering intrinsic motivation among their students.

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership can be characterized by a "carrot and stick" strategy (Bass, 2008), employing both rewards and penalties. This leadership style comprises three key elements: contingent reward, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. Contingent reward involves leaders setting specific objectives and informing their followers about them. When these objectives are met within the stipulated time or as planned, leaders offer rewards like bonuses, prizes, positive feedback, or celebratory acknowledgments to recognize the successful performance (DeDeyn, 2021). Active management by exception entails leaders closely overseeing the progress of group tasks or projects. If any deviations from established norms or guidelines arise, leaders promptly intervene by offering corrective feedback and guidance to address the issues and steer efforts back on course. Passive management by exception describes leaders who take a more hands-off approach, allowing the group to operate based on established norms. However, if deviations become noticeable or problematic, leaders step in to address the situation, even if it's after the situation has escalated or exceeded initial control. Transactional leaders primarily serve their own interests and cultivate external motivation (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Laissez-faire Leadership

The concept of laissez-faire leadership is often seen as contradictory to effective leadership. It characterizes a hands-off approach where a leader avoids taking responsibility, delays making decisions, disregards the needs of their followers, shows indifference to giving feedback, and neglects the development of their followers (DeDeyn, 2021). In an educational setting, teachers might overlook correcting students' behavior or neglect classroom management. Laissez-faire leadership involves a

leader attempting to delegate authority to team members based on trust and confidence in their skills. However, this approach is successful only when team members are capable and willing to take on responsibilities (Khan, 2017).

Teacher Leadership

Good leadership plays an integral role in effective teaching (Greenier and Whitehead, 2019). Teacher leadership serves as an indicator of a teacher's competence (Bouwman et al., 2019; Canterino et al., 2020; García Torres, 2019; Lumby, 2019; Tian & Risku, 2019), but it still lacks a precise definition (Lovett, 2018; Wenner & Campbell, 2017).

A teacher leader is someone who possesses the power to positively impact students' lives, cares deeply, serves as a role model, believes in students' potential, provides support, and empowers students to express themselves (Papalewis, 2007). This form of teacher leadership involves inspiration, innate influence, compassion, role modeling, and unwavering belief in students (ibid). Teacher leaders are recognized for their teaching experience, excellence, and respect in the field (York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Leadership is evident in various teacher activities, such as goal setting, curriculum development, self-assessment, and reflection on their teaching methods (Day et al., 2016). The components that constitute teacher leadership encompass achievement, building rapport with students, willingness to take risks, trust building, and collaboration (Zugelder et al., 2018). A culture rooted in trust, support, and continuous learning foster the growth of teacher leadership (Bangs & MacBeath, 2012; Charles, 2017; Frost, 2011; Meristo & Eisenschmidt, 2014; Mokhele, 2016).

Effective teacher leadership aligns with humanization, as perceived by students (Greenier & Whitehead, 2016). According to students, a teacher leader is passionate, charismatic, enthusiastic, confident, deeply engaged in the teaching profession, capable of maintaining mutual respect and empathy, excels in their work, flexible, strikes a balance between challenge and fun, and makes learning enjoyable (DeDeyn, 2021).

Teacher leadership entails a set of skills exhibited by teachers aimed at enhancing teaching and learning beyond the classroom (Danielson, 2006; Wenner & Campbell, 2017; Cooper et al., 2016). However, Muijs and Harris (2003) argue that teacher leadership extends to both inside and outside the classroom. Some scholars contend that teacher leadership involves decisions regarding education administration and extracurricular activities (Bascia, 1997).

Others assert that leadership is a mindset or a reflection of an individual's mindset (Cherkowski, 2018). Teacher leadership is associated with educational improvement (Gningue et al., 2022) and is linked to the decision-making process, teacher agency in building rapport with students, breaking barriers, and continuous learning to enhance student outcomes (Sebastian et al., 2017; York-Barr & Duke, 2004).

Teacher leadership encompasses what teachers do within the classroom, with their students as their followers (Augustsson & Boström, 2012). It significantly influences student learning engagement, decision-making, creativity, and school improvement (Kandiko, 2012; Zacher & Johnson, 2015; Bagley & Margolis, 2018; Ingersoll et al., 2018).

Professional development for teachers has a positive impact on teacher quality, practices, and school improvement (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2009; Flores, 2004; Dinham, 2007; Kwakman, 2003). Effective classroom leadership is closely associated with the achievement of learning outcomes and the active role of instructors (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2009; Dörnyei & Murphey, 2009).

Teacher leadership holds significant importance for educators as it can reduce aggression towards teachers and positively affect their well-being (Bass et al., 2016; Curran et al., 2019). School improvement relies heavily on the quality of teaching, which in turn impacts student learning and engagement (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Kwakman, 2003; Reeves, 2010).

2. METHODS

Research design

This paper seeks to enhance our understanding of the significance of leadership within the classroom and leadership approaches that students find most effective in increasing their motivation to learn. The research employed a quantitative methodology and focused on Moroccan EFL secondary school students at two levels: 1st and 2nd baccalaureate students specializing in physics and experimental sciences at Al Ahd Al Jadid Secondary School in the Taounat region. The questionnaire consists of three options, and participants were instructed to choose as many responses as they felt accurately represented their views (see the appendix).

Research Instrument

The questionnaire in this study was developed based on a thorough review of the existing literature. The researchers opted for a convenience sampling method because participants were readily accessible to them. The primary objective of the questionnaire was to assess the impact of teacher leadership styles on students' motivation and academic performance. It was distributed to Moroccan secondary school students with the intention of gaining a deep understanding of their preferences and learning patterns. This insight would enable teachers to better understand and effectively engage with their students to help them succeed. Google Forms served as the survey tool for administering the questionnaire to students. Participants were instructed to select response options that best reflected their views. After collecting the data, the researchers used SPSS software to analyze data, employing frequencies and percentages.

Participants

The research was conducted with a group of Moroccan EFL students, specifically focusing on four classes of first- and second-year baccalaureate students majoring in physics and first-year experimental sciences at Al Ahd Al Jadid Secondary School in the Taounat region. The total number of students in these classes was approximately 141. Within this group, there were 52 male students and 89 female students, all aged between 17 and 19 years old.

3. RESULTS

In this section, we present the outcomes of the researchers' data collection effort aimed at investigating the leadership approaches that hold the potential to enhance both student motivation and academic achievements. Participants were given the option to select a suitable learning context, with the opportunity to choose one, two, or all three of them. The subsequent tables provide a visual representation of the achieved results.

Table 1. I feel motivated and learn better with a transformational teacher leader

		Fréquence	Pourcentage	Pourcentage valide	Pourcentage cumulé
Valide	0	3	2,1	2,1	2,1
	1	138	97,9	97,9	100,0
Total		141	100,0	100,0	

As illustrated in Table 1, among the 141 participants in this study, a significant majority, accounting for 97.9%, chose transformational leadership as their preferred teaching and learning approach. In contrast, only a minimal 2.1% of participants did not select this particular educational environment.

Table 2. I feel motivated and learn better with a transactional teacher leader

		Fréquence	Pourcentage	Pourcentage valide	Pourcentage cumulé
Valide	0	54	38,3	38,3	38,3
	2	87	61,7	61,7	100,0
Total		141	100,0	100,0	

Table 2 provides an overview of the participant preferences regarding learning in an environment led by a transactional leader. Notably, 61% of the participants expressed a preference for this leadership style, finding it conducive to their motivation for learning. In contrast, 38% of participants did not consider the transactional leadership approach suitable for their learning needs.

Table 3. I feel motivated and I learn more with a laissez-faire teacher leader

		Fréquence	Pourcentage	Pourcentage valide	Pourcentage cumulé
Valide	0	121	85,8	85,8	85,8
	3	20	14,2	14,2	100,0
Total		141	100,0	100,0	

Table 3 reveals that only a modest 14.2% of the participants selected laissez-faire leadership as their preferred learning environment. In stark contrast, a significant majority, comprising 85% of the participants, did not find this particular leadership style conducive to their learning preferences.

4. DISCUSSION

The main objective of this research is to investigate the significance of leadership styles within the classroom and examine leadership approaches that have the potential to enhance both student motivation and academic performance. The results suggest that leadership plays a crucial role, as it can either facilitate students in achieving success or contribute to their failure in doing so. The leadership style that resonates most with students and inspires them to excel is the transformational leadership style. This style is characterized by a humanistic approach where the teacher is not seen as an authority figure but rather as someone who provides positive guidance and serves as an exemplary role model to inspire and motivate students to achieve their dreams. Similarly, Adhikary (2017) results suggest that teacher's effectiveness is significantly predicted by teacher's transformational leadership style and is also a significant predictor of student satisfaction.

Some teachers are aware that their students may be facing difficulties, but they often feel helpless and choose to overlook the issues. They believe that stopping to correct or re-explain concepts would be a waste of time and energy, attributing the struggles solely to the students themselves. In contrast, a transformational leader recognizes that students have diverse needs. Some may require multiple explanations, while others come well prepared and grasp the lesson independently. Some students may understand the lesson on the first try, showing autonomy, while others need encouragement or guidance. Zourmpakis et al. (2022) assert that it is the teacher's

responsibility to comprehend the needs of students and tailor their approach to meet those needs. Students favor this approach (transformational leadership) because they desire to be treated with kindness and respect. However, they should also acknowledge the need to demonstrate their worthiness of such treatment to their teachers. It's important to note that teachers may adopt a stricter demeanor when they perceive that the classroom is not under control. Likewise, Howard and Knight (2022) conducted an analysis of leadership styles to determine which style had the most significant positive and negative effects on student academic achievement in rural high schools in Alabama. Through a survey-based approach, the study revealed that transformational leadership exhibited the highest potential for positively influencing student academic achievement in this context. In the interval, Hijazi and Shamsi (2022) conducted a study with the aim to investigate the connections between the leadership styles of English language lecturers and student satisfaction. The results revealed a positive correlation between transformational leadership and student satisfaction. However, the transactional leadership style displayed a negative correlation with students' satisfaction.

Nearly half of the participants in the study found a transactional leadership environment to be conducive for their work. These student participants expressed a preference for a "carrot and stick" approach to learning because they believe it keeps them focused and motivated. Many of them chose this approach because they were already prepared to invest effort and wanted to be rewarded whether through bonuses, positive feedback, or recognition, among other incentives. It's evident that they favored this approach because they were willing to work hard and did not place as much emphasis on potential penalties. This choice was made despite the fact that the transactional leadership style entails that the teacher does not intervene proactively but instead waits for students to encounter difficulties. The students viewed this as a valuable learning opportunity because making mistakes and learning from them can enhance their autonomy and acquisition of skills. However, some students did not opt for transactional leadership, possibly because they doubted their abilities and believed they might not always be prepared to complete assignments and take responsibility. Alternatively, some students may be accustomed to a more hands-on teaching approach and prefer their teacher to guide them closely, indicating a preference for less autonomy and a greater need for guidance. A study carried out by Khoudri & Zerouh (2023) aimed to explore whether project-based learning could promote learner autonomy in a Moroccan English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. The findings indicated that not all learners held a favorable view of project-based learning, possibly because they were used to a teaching approach where the teacher provided all the information and guidance, leading them to become passive in their learning.

The laissez-faire leadership style received very few responses in the study. Those who did not choose this option believe that learning cannot effectively occur in an environment where the teacher does not take responsibility, remains indifferent towards students' mistakes, and allows chaos and noise to persist. Instead, they prefer a teacher who genuinely cares about them and creates a conducive learning environment. However, Britwum et al. (2022) conducted a study to evaluate the impact of leadership styles on student achievement in Colleges of Education using a questionnaire. The findings indicated that the Laissez-faire leadership style emerged as a significant predictor of students' academic achievement. On the other hand, the respondents who opted for the laissez-faire style are students who prioritize enjoyment through misbehavior and appreciate the freedom to lead the class in any direction they desire. However, those who do not support this leadership style or learning environment express concerns about the lack of trust and accountability when a teacher does not actively guide and manage the classroom.

5. CONCLUSION

With the aim of advancing our understanding of the significance of implementing and demonstrating a leadership approach within the classroom to contribute to student achievement and motivation, this study concluded that teachers should embrace a transformative leadership approach. Depending on the specific needs of students, there may be instances where a blend of both transformational and transactional leadership styles is appropriate. Most students prefer to be treated with respect and to draw inspiration from an exemplary teacher, but occasionally, they appreciate learning in an environment where the teacher exercises some degree of authority and discipline. However, very few students opted for a laissez-faire leadership approach because they believe that genuine learning cannot occur when a teacher displays indifference and lacks the ability to manage the classroom or create a welcoming and conducive learning environment.

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6. APPENDIX

I feel motivated and learn better when: (Transformational leader)

- I have a respectful relationship with my teacher, and they treat me with respect too.
- I feel connected with my teacher
- I feel a strong connection with my teacher
- My teacher sets high expectations for me and believes in my potential
- My teacher inspires and encourages me to overcome challenges and be creative
- My teacher understands my preferred learning style
- My teacher shows concern for my problems

I feel motivated and learn better when: (Transactional Leader)

- My teacher assigns tasks, and we receive rewards (like bonuses, positive feedback, or acknowledgment) for completing them. If we don't do them, there are penalties.
- My teacher is there, but interferes until we make mistakes.

I feel motivated and I learn more in an environment where: (Laissez-faire)

- My teacher is unprepared for class.

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- My teacher doesn't correct my mistakes or explain what I should do.
 - There is a lot of noise and disruptive behavior in the classroom, and my teacher doesn't intervene.
 - My teacher allows me to do whatever I want without any guidance.